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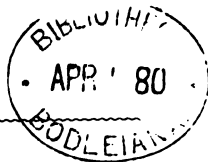


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THOUGHTS ON
The Seven Last Words
OF
Christ Crucified.

BY THE
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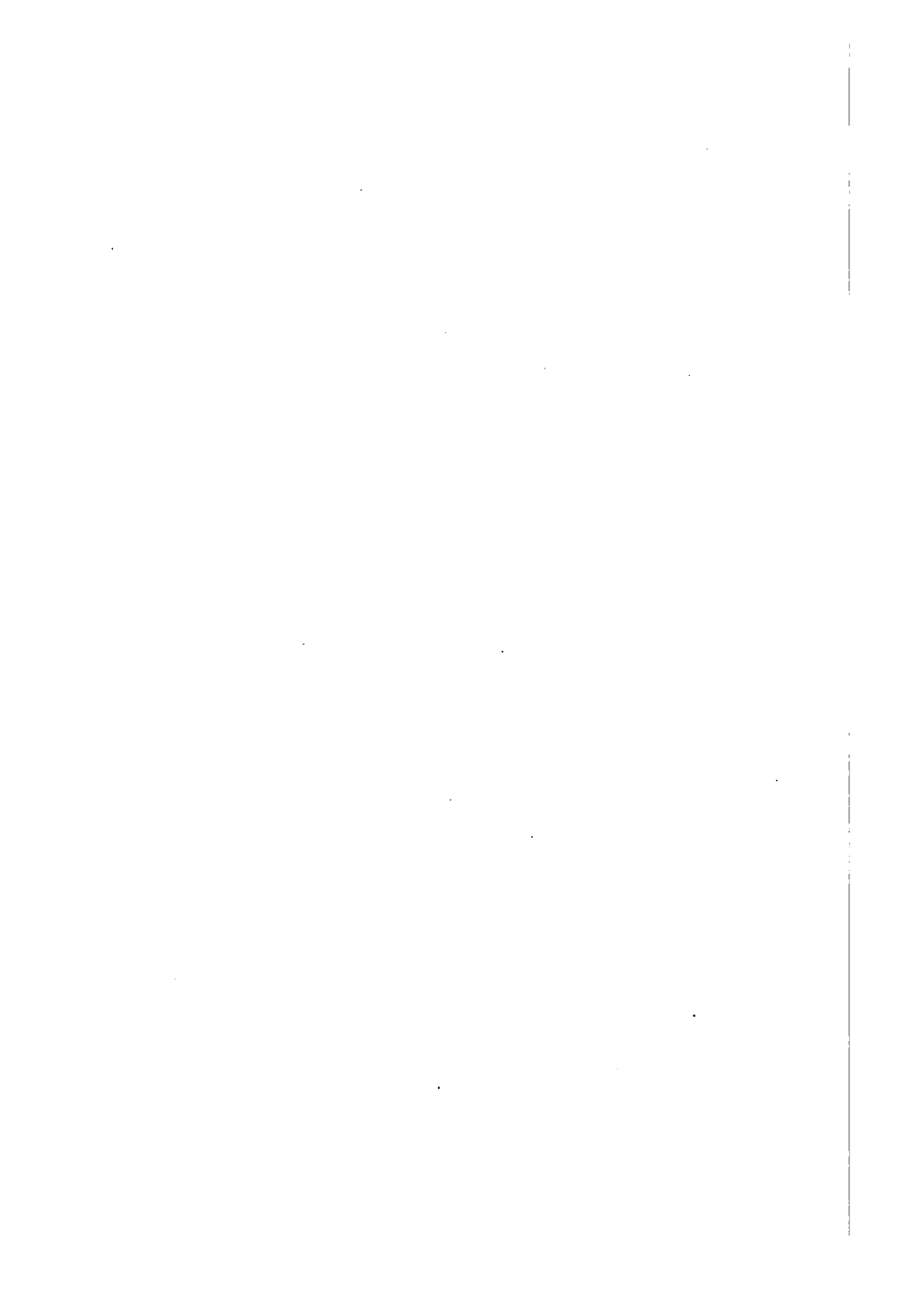
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PREFACE.

THESE Thoughts are gathered from many sources. They are published in the hope that they may be found useful to the younger clergy in preparing courses of sermons for Lent, and meditations for Holy Week and for the Three Hours' Services on Good Friday ; also to many who, through age, infirmity, or sickness, are unable to avail themselves of the special services in church which are now so generally provided during those holy seasons ; and to all who have learned to find their greatest daily comfort in coming to the Cross of Christ.

QUATFORD VICARAGE,
Epiphany, 1880.



THOUGHTS ON THE SEVEN LAST WORDS OF CHRIST CRUCIFIED.

~~Now these be the last words of David.~~¹—2 SAM. xxiii. 1.

THE dying words of a good man have always a sacred and solemn interest. And if they have been the expression of pious devotion, earnest counsel, or affectionate remembrance, they linger in the memory, and are cherished in the heart of those who heard them, and thus live, as an active influence for good, long after the tongue that uttered them is silenced in the grave. The Holy Scriptures, true, as ever, to the instincts of our nature, take notice of and call special attention to the last words of many of God's saints. The prophetic utterances of Jacob, at the close of which "he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people" (Gen. xlix. 33); the "commandment" which "Joseph, when he died, gave concerning his bones" (l. 25), which the apostle adduces as the expression of the patriarch's faith in the promises of God (Heb. xi. 22); "the blessing wherewith

¹ Cf. Ezek. xxxiv. 23, 24.

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Moses, the man of God, blessed the children of Israel before his death" (Deut. xxxiii. 1); Joshua's last address to all the tribes of Israel (Josh. xxiv.); the especial mention of David's last profession of faith (2 Sam. xxiii. 1); and the dying words of the proto-martyr, S. Stephen (Acts vii. 59, 60);—these examples will readily recur to the diligent reader of the sacred records.

It is natural that those who in their life have laboured to glorify God and edify His people, should wish to die as they have lived; and, knowing that "the time of their departure is at hand" (2 Tim. iv. 6), and that "shortly they must put off this their tabernacle" (2 S. Pet. i. 14), they will try, so long as the faculties of reason and of speech are continued to them, to make their last words worthy of remembrance; and, like S. Paul, will declare their hope for the future as based upon God's promise through Christ (2 Tim. iv. 7, 8); and, like S. Peter, will rivet in the minds of the bystanders the truths which they have taught or professed in their life, and "endeavour that they may be able, after their decease, to have these things always in remembrance" (2 S. Pet. i. 15). So our own poet-laureate represents Cranmer as saying to the people, just before his end,—

"Good people, every man in time of death
Would fain set forth some saying that may live
After his death, and better human-kind;
For death gives life's last word a power to live,
And, like the stone-cut epitaph, remain
After the vanished voice, and speak to men."¹

¹ Tennyson's "Queen Mary," p. 204.

And our Lord has consecrated this usage by adopting it Himself. On the eve of His Passion He gathered round Him the twelve, and spoke those memorable words which, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, S. John has recorded in the thirteenth and following chapters of his gospel; and then, immediately before he crossed the brook Cedron and entered the garden of His agony, He breathed forth to the Father, in the hearing of His disciples, that prayer for those whom He was about to leave, and for His people to the end of time, which is recorded in the seventeenth chapter of the same gospel.

But even these were not his last words. Even when He was crucified He still spake; and probably one reason why He chose "the death of the cross," was, that to the very last He might retain the liberty of speech. And if at all times His words had a mighty power and influence; if at the close of His sermon on the mount, "the people were astonished at His doctrine, for He taught them as one having authority" (S. Matt. vii. 28, 29); if when the Pharisees and chief priests sent to take Him, the officers returned with the commission unfulfilled, urging, as the excuse of their failure, "Never man spake like this Man" (S. John vii. 46); if, when Judas and his band came to apprehend Him, at those awful words "I am (He)"—ἐγώ εἰμι—"they went backward and fell to the ground"¹ (S. John xviii. 6);—"if, then, His words thus at other times were so gracious or so awful, what shall we expect—or rather,

¹ "Quid judicaturus faciat, qui jun licandus hoc fecit? quid regnaturus poterit, qui moriturus hoc potuit" (S. Augustine).

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what shall we not expect—of Him that speaketh from the cross?!"¹

From the memorable day on which these Seven Words were spoken, to the present hour, His people have ever treasured them as most fruitful subjects for pious meditation, and have found in them lessons for the regulation of their life, and for their preparation for death. And as all and every part of our Lord's life and death in some manner contributed to the work of our redemption and the satisfaction for our transgressions, who shall say how many of our "idle words," and impatient murmurings, and angry curses, and malicious slanders, and bitter upbraidings were atoned for by these Seven Sayings of our Saviour as He hung upon the cross?

"See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh" (Heb. xii. 25).

¹ Bishop Abraham's "Festival and Lenten Lectures."

I.

Πάτερ ἄφες αὐτοῖς· οὐ γὰρ οἶδασ τί ποιοῦσι..

Pater, ignosce illis; nesciunt etenim quid faciant.

Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.

S. LUKE xxiii. 34.

How strange and striking is the contrast between the calmness of the Divine Sufferer and the tumult which was raging round the scene of His sufferings! He had said, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me" (S. John xii. 32); and, for good or evil, are thus drawn unto Him representatives of every class, condition, and character. But foremost in the group around Him are the chief priests, completing in hideous malignity their murderous counsels, and, all unconsciously, sacrificing that very "Lamb of God" the offering of whom their pious forefathers had for so many generations typified in the sacrifices of the tabernacle and temple worship. With no pretence of worship, but with impious blasphemy, these priests disparage and dishonour the Divine Personification of all the rites and ceremonial of the law, whose accredited officers they are; and urge on the multitude, Jew and Gentile alike, to revile and insult Him whose majesty and goodness they ought to have been the first to acknowledge and proclaim. Him

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whose advent had fulfilled the hopes and longings of every past generation they have branded as an impostor, and with unprecedented blasphemy have declared to be a blasphemer. And having sought His death, through envy of His popularity and fear of His influence over the multitude, they are now mad with frenzied joy, seeing Him at last the victim of the popular scorn and derision, condemned as a blasphemer, and crucified as a malefactor. They do not scruple even to jest at His sufferings as He hangs upon the cross, and to taunt Him with the contrast between the dignity of His pretensions and the ignominy of His condition. In meek silence He has borne it all. To the very letter He has fulfilled their own Scripture, "He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth" (Isa. liii. 7). He felt the wounds which they were inflicting upon their own souls more than those that they had inflicted upon Himself.¹ He had but to speak the word, and every tongue that was now so bitterly reviling Him had been struck dumb and confounded at the revelation of His glory. But a miracle of vengeance had not been so marvellous a proof of His Divinity, as was the greater miracle of withholding and concealing His miraculous power.

"Twelve legions girded with angelic sword
Were at His beck, the scorned and buffeted :

¹ "Christus flagellis coesus, spinis coronis coronatus, clavis confossus, crucifixus, opprobriis saturatus, omnium dolorum immemor, ait, 'Pater, dimitte illis'" (S. Bernard).

He healed another's scratch—His own side bled,
Side, feet, and hands, with cruel piercings gored.
Oh, wonderful the wonders left undone,
And scarce less wonderful than those He wrought !
Oh, self-restraint, passing all human thought,
To have all power, and be as having none !
Oh ! self-denying love, which felt alone
For needs of others, never for its own !"¹

But while He thus "kept silence, they thought wickedly that He was even such an one as themselves" (Psa. l. 21).

At length His lips open, and He is about to break the long silence. Heaven, Earth, and Hell await the issue of His words. Is His long-suffering patience at last exhausted? Will He call down vengeance on His persecutors, and cry to Heaven, "Consume them in Thy wrath, consume them that they may perish" (Psa. lix. 13)? Is He about to renounce for ever the redemption of a race so wicked, so ungrateful, so obdurate? Had He done so, none could have wondered : all must have confessed how just was His displeasure : at such a forsaking of humanity "every mouth must have been stopped" (Rom. iii. 19), or opened only to confess how "righteous were His ways, and how true were His judgments" (Psa. cxix. 137). He had cried to His Father, "The waters are come in, even unto My soul. I am come into deep waters, so that the floods run over Me" (Psa. lxxix. 1, 2). But "many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it" (Cant. viii. 7). He thinks not of His own wrongs, pains, or reproach, but has compassion on those who have inflicted His passion, and heals those by whom He is wounded, and procures life for

¹ Archbishop Trench.

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those by whom He is slain.¹ And when He breaks His silence, it is not to ask confusion on His enemies, nor even compassion for Himself. His first words on the cross to which His enemies have nailed Him are, "Father, forgive them."

"*Father.*" It is observable that with this word, containing so signal a profession of faith and love, our Lord begins this first and also the last of His Seven Sayings. It is the expression of unfaltering trust amidst circumstances of unexampled trial. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him" (Job xiii. 15), His servant Job had said hundreds of years before; and it is this same spirit of unconquerable fidelity and unquestioning reliance upon God's justice and goodness which is breathed forth in this word. But so perfect and uninterrupted was the communion between our Lord and His Father, that we feel sure we may apply those words which He spake at the raising of Lazarus to this prayer also: "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me; and I know that Thou hearest Me always: but for the people which stand by, I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me" (S. John xi. 41, 42). If, as S. Paul tells us, He "was seen of angels" (1 Tim. iii. 16), and if, as S. Peter assures us, "these things the angels desire to look into" (1 Epist. i. 12), doubtless they were looking on with wondering gaze at the awful humiliation of their Lord and King. It may be that, at so amazing

¹ "Non suam attendit injuriam, non poenam reputat, non sentit contumelias, sed ipsis potius a quibus patitur ille compatitur; a quibus vulneratur, ille medetur; vitam procurat, a quibus occiditur" (S. Anselm).

a "mystery of godliness," the coalition of such majesty and meekness, such glory and shame, may have staggered, for one dark moment, their comprehension, as it assuredly surpassed their experience. But this one word of the Crucified One, "Father," showing the unabated unity of will and counsel and love between the Father and the Son, must at once have swept away every shadow of disquietude and fear, and they would return to sing, with lowlier homage and more devoted adoration than ever, their "Holy, Holy, Holy," before the Eternal Throne.

There were, doubtless, also other inhabitants of the unseen world, looking with intensest eagerness on this scene at Calvary. Satan, against whom our Lord three years before had done battle, in the wilderness, and those "powers of darkness" with whom, only the night before, He had agonized in the garden of Gethsemane, were watching with cruel malignity the success of their schemes, and perhaps still hoping that their efforts might not be in vain. "If Thou be the Son of God,"—so had the tempter opened two of his temptations in the wilderness; "if Thou be the Son of God,"—so his children echoed his words only a little later as they mocked beneath His cross. But the first word He utters tells them that their insinuations and blasphemies cannot make Him withdraw anything of His claims, nor abate anything of His confidence in Him that sent Him: He lifts up His eyes to Heaven, and says "Father," which one word answers to all the malice of the tempter, "*I am* the Son of God?"

There were also ranged around His cross His bitter enemies, "the chief priests and scribes and elders of the

people," exulting in the complete accomplishment of their envious counsels. At different times during His ministry, our Lord's assertion of oneness and equality with the Father had roused their prejudice and hatred against Him. It was on this very charge that, at the beginning of His ministry, they had "sought to kill Him," because He said "that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God" (S. John v. 17-18). It was for this same cause that, only a few months ago, when He had said, "I and my Father are one," they had taken up stones to stone Him. And when He said, "Many good works have I showed you from My Father: for which of those works do ye stone Me?" the Jews answered Him, saying, "For a good work we stone Thee not, but for blasphemy; and because that Thou, being a Man, makest Thyself God" (x. 31-32). Nay, this very morning, this was the accusation they had brought against Him to Pilate. The Jews had told him, "We have a law; and by our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God" (xix. 7). But now that they have condemned Him to be guilty of death, and have induced the Roman governor to "give sentence that it should be as they required," the first word He utters, as the nails of crucifixion are driven into His sacred hands and feet, so far from retracting only confirms what He has said before. "Then said Jesus, Father."

There were also beside His cross, or only at a little distance from it, a few of His friends and followers—His Blessed Mother, and the women who had followed Him from Galilee and had wept over Him on His way to crucifixion, and possibly some of His disciples, at all events

“that disciple whom Jesus loved.” Now surely those words spoken by Simeon were fulfilled in the Blessed Virgin’s experience, “Yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also” (S. Luke ii. 35). And faithful as the other women were, and more courageous in their loving trust than His disciples had been, yet this sad sight must have filled their hearts with sorrow, and possibly may have caused them, while they maintained the utmost confidence in His sincerity and goodness, yet to have wavered in their minds as to the truth of His claims and the realization of their hopes. Could this be the Son of God who was thus delivered into the hands of sinful men, and allowed to die as a malefactor, accursed of God and rejected of men? But in this His hour of deepest humiliation and extremest agony, He still declares the truth of His eternal Sonship, saying, “Father.”

And the occurrence of this word here teaches us at the outset that, with the most utter and confiding faith, we may trust in the merits of His sufferings, and with the most earnest attention listen to these Seven Sayings, according to that which was said by the Father at the time of His transfiguration: “This is My beloved Son, *in whom I am well pleased: hear ye Him*” (S. Matt. xvii. 5).

“*Forgive.*” Never yet, since “sin entered into the world, and death by sin” (Rom. v. 12), had man approached his dying hour but he had need to cry, as his sins of commission and omission arose to confront him, “Father, forgive.” Never yet had man met his death with such a perfect memory of his life past, such a sure foreknowledge that death was only a few hours distant, such a certainty of

the existence and employments of the unseen world to which death was about to introduce him. Were these words, then, "Father, forgive," to be a recantation of all that He had said before? Was this Son of God, who had boldly challenged His enemies, saying, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" (S. John viii. 46); who had told His disciples, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me" (xiv. 30); of whom Pilate had confessed, "I find no fault in Him" (xix. 5);—was He about to confess that His own conscience convicted Him, as the light of eternity began to break upon His humanity, and that, so far from meriting and obtaining forgiveness for others, He needed it for Himself? Was He, however superior, yet in this like to those high priests of the old dispensation, who "needed to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people" (Heb. vii. 27)? No; not a word of any such need for Himself He utters. He was "such a High Priest, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (ver. 26.). He was a "Lamb without blemish" of original, "without spot" of actual, sin (1 S. Pet. i. 19). He prays, "Father, forgive *them*." And it is by virtue of this utter sinlessness that He is qualified to be the Mediator and Intercessor for sinners. We often feel that, though we are bidden to "pray one for another," (S. James v. 16), our sins are so many and great that intercessions from our lips are more likely to bring down a rebuke on our arrogance than help to our brethren, for "we know that God heareth not sinners." But here is "a worshipper of God, who doeth His will; Him He heareth" (S. John ix. 31).

But why does He, thus sinless, pray to *His Father* to forgive His crucifiers? Is not He, as the Son of God, and equal with the Father, the God to whom "belong mercies and forgivenesses" (Dan. ix. 9)? Has he not, as the Son of Man, "power on earth to forgive sins" (S. Matt. xix. 6)? Could He not, therefore, as easily and as effectually have opened the Kingdom of Heaven to these, as, a little later, to the thief dying beside Him? Yes, doubtless: but now He is exercising His priestly, as then His kingly office. And He would teach His enemies that He is their Mediator and "Advocate with the Father" (1 S. John ii. 1); and that they may be forgiven at His request, if they will acknowledge their Advocate to be the Son of God. And it is worthy of observation that this prayer in which, as was foretold, He "made intercession for the transgressors" (Isa. liii. 12), is recorded only by S. Luke, who is generally supposed to have written his gospel with especial reference to the priestly character of Christ;¹ and, as a physician, brought prominently forward those sayings of Christ which are as medicine to the fainting soul.² Our Lord here teaches us, that, as He makes intercession for His own believing people (S. John xvii.), so "He has compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way" (Heb. v. 2), and is for them "a merciful and faithful High Priest" (ii. 17). He shows also how He Himself observed His own

¹ "Quia Lucas per vituli figuram sacerdotium Christi scribere disposuit, recte apud eum Dominus et pro persecutoribus suis jure sacerdotis intercedit" (Bede, in Luc. Evang. Exp.).

² "Fuit medicus, et pariter omnia verta illius languentis sunt medicinæ" (Jerom. Ep. ad Paulinum).

precept,¹ "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you" (S. Matt. v. 44); and inasmuch as He did this under such provocations and unmerited persecutions as none of His people could ever be called to experience, He showed Himself to be indeed the "Child of His Father which is in heaven, who maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good" (v. 45); and "is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil" (S. Luke vi. 35). And hereby He has given to us all "an example that we should do as He has done" (S. John xiii. 15);² and if as yet, "through the weakness of our mortal nature," we cannot imitate Him fully and faithfully, yet we can at least forbear from praying against our enemies with angry curses; and in time, as we grow in love and rise towards that perfection which, especially in this particular of mercy, He bids us aspire to (compare S. Matt. v. 44-48, with S. Luke vi. 27-36), we shall "learn to love and bless our persecutors," and pray for them that they may be forgiven.³

"*Forgive them.*" How sublime above all the loftiest teachings or even conceptions of heathen morality was the

¹ "Quod dicto monuerat Christus, orandum ὑπὲρ τῶν ἐπηρεαζόντων ἡμᾶς, id facto nunc præstat. Pontificem se vere exhibens, cujus est munus προσφέρειν ὑπὲρ τῶν τοῦ λαοῦ ἀγνοημάτων" (Grotius, Ann. in lib. Evang.).

² "Se habuit sicut magister in cathedrâ : et lignum pendentis est cathedra docentis" (S. Augustine).

³ "Imitare ergo Dominum tuum, pro inimicis intercede; et si necdum potes, saltem cave ne contra illos orare præsumas. Sic etiam quotidianis profectionibus auctus eris, et ad illud quandoque, Domino juvante, pervenies, ut etiam pro illis intercedere possis" (Bede, in Luc. Evang. Exp. lib. vi.).

spirit which actuated our Lord. Aristotle says that "to be revenged on one's enemy is more honourable than to be reconciled,"¹ and placing revenge and resentment as a mean between the vicious extremes of cruelty on the other hand, and abjectness of spirit on the other, gives it a place among moral virtues. Plato, in his book of laws, maintains that justice calls for its exercise, not merely in the case of national law, but of personal retaliation. Cicero says, "it is the first office of justice to hurt no man, *unless first provoked by an injury*," on which exception Lactantius well comments: "Oh, how simple and true a sentiment he has spoiled by the addition of two words!"² Even Seneca, although in one place he makes it "a characteristic of a great mind to disregard injuries,"³ yet elsewhere, among his many grand and enlightened maxims of morality, declares that pardon is the remitting of a deserved punishment, and to pardon a transgressor who ought to be punished is a degree of clemency which no wise man will be guilty of. Nay, even among the Jews, "to whom were committed the oracles of God," and who thus had "much advantage" over the Gentile world (Rom. iii. 1, 2), this spirit of forgiveness was little known. It is true that Abraham, the father of the faithful, (Gen. xviii. 21-32),—Moses, the meekest of men, (Deut. ix. 16-29), prayed for their enemies; but Elijah was not of this "spirit" (S. Luke ix. 54, 55) when he called down fire from heaven upon the captains and their fifties, which were sent to take

¹ Rhet. lib. 9. cap. 1.

² "O quam simplicem veramque sententiam duorum verborum adjectione corrumpit!"

³ "Magni animi est injurias despicere" (De Irâ. ii. 32).

him (2 Kings i. 9-12); nor Elisha, when he cursed the children who mocked him at Bethel (ii. 23, 24); nor David when his "days drew near that he should die, and he charged Solomon" concerning Joab, "Thou knowest what Joab, the son of Zeruiah, did to me . . . do therefore according to thy wisdom, and let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace" (1 Kings ii. 1, 5, 6),—and concerning Shimei, who "cursed him with a grievous curse," "His hoar head bring thou down to the ground with blood" (vv. 8, 9). And though it may be objected that those words were, possibly, spoken in a public character, as a king against the enemies of God, and his conduct towards Saul and Absalom breathed much more of the gospel spirit, it may be replied that our Lord was, at this moment, speaking also in a public as well as private character. But the greatest contrast to our Lord's conduct here is, perhaps, afforded in the dying words of Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, who, when he was being stoned to death, called for vengeance on his enemies, "And when he died, he said, The Lord look upon it, and require it" (2 Chron. xxiv. 22). In our Lord's own day it was reckoned among them as a precept requiring obedience, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy" (S. Matt. v. 43). But from the lips of Christ we learn purer maxims of morality and religion than the world had ever heard before, and at His Cross we learn how to practice them :—

" 'Jesu, do Thou my foes forgive :'
He who would learn this prayer must live
Under the Holy Cross."¹

¹ "Christian Year," S. Stephen's Day.

If He could thus lavish His love on His murderers, and pray for their forgiveness, who are we, that we should withhold our love and forgiveness from those who injure us? If He forgave us "all that debt" of ten thousand talents, can we refuse to remit ours of "a hundred pence"¹ (S. Matt. xviii. 23-35)? Well does the son of Sirach say, "He that revengeth shall find vengeance from the Lord, and will surely keep his sins in remembrance. Forgive thy neighbour the hurt that he hath done unto thee: so shall thy sins also be forgiven when thou prayest. One man beareth hatred against another, and doth he seek pardon from the Lord? He sheweth no mercy to a man which is like himself; and doth he ask forgiveness of his own sins? If he that is but flesh nourish hatred, who will entreat for pardon for his sins? Remember thy end, and let enmity cease" (Ecclus. xxviii. 1-6). He who thus prayed for His crucifiers has taught us to pray, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us," and has added the promise and the warning (to call special attention to the necessity of this exercise of mercy and compassion), "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father which is in Heaven forgive your trespasses" (S. Matt. vi. 12, 14, 15). If we bear this in mind, that if "our delight is in cursing, it shall happen unto us, and if we love not blessing, it shall be far from us:" if

¹ "Cur igitur formica, festuca, cinis, pulvis et favilla vindictam expetis, remissionem protrahis, cum videas Regem gloriæ Dominumque remittentem minas, contumelias, et blasphemias, et condonantem crucis molestias et reales injurias?" (S. Augustine).

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we "clothe ourselves with cursing as with a raiment, it shall come into our bowels like water, and like oil into our bones, and be as the cloke that we have upon us, and the girdle that we are always girded withal" (Psa. cix. 17-19), the prayer of our heart will be—

"Jesu, this selfish heart convert,
To pray for those who seek my hurt." ¹

"*Them.*" Whom are we to understand as included in this prayer? Very beautifully does Stier comment on this word: "The Lord says with designed indefiniteness no more than '*them*,' in order to make room for every one who *will* and who *can* include himself." The only limit assigned is that of ignorance; but this prayer is only offered for those "who know not what they do."

1. First, our Lord is here evidently praying for His actual executioners.² "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they are doing" (τί ποιοῦνσι). These men were only fulfilling the commands of their superior officers, who, in their turn, were but the servants of the Roman government; and the Romans, as heathens, had no idea how momentous was the work which they were about, and that this was indeed the most eventful day in their history, and in the history of the world. "The wisdom of God none of the princes of this world knew; *for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory*" (1 Cor. ii. 7, 8).

¹ "People's Hymnal," 94.

² Pro militibus, Pilati jussu necem maturantibus, ad Patrem deprecatur videtur. Id veri simile est factum ex evangelistarum Matt. xxvii. 29, seqq. et Marc. xv. 16, seqq. narrationibus, qui tradunt milites Jesum arripuisse, virgis cecidisse, etc., tandemque crucifixisse" (Wolfii curæ Philol. et Critic. in S. Evang. Luc.).

2. This prayer was offered also, doubtless, for the Jewish people, misled by their chief priests and rulers; for S. Peter expressly says to the people, "I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers" (Acts iii. 17).

3. These very rulers, also, had this excuse of ignorance, for our Lord Himself had said to the Pharisees, "Ye neither know Me nor My Father" (S. John viii. 19), and foretelling to His disciples the future persecutions which they would be called to endure, He says, "The time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father nor Me" (xvi. 2, 3). "There was a vail on His glory, and another on their hearts: and how could they see through two vails?"¹

4. Further, this prayer surely includes all those in every age, who "crucify the Son of God afresh" (Heb. vi. 6), doing it "ignorantly through unbelief" (1 Tim. i. 13).

"*For.*" There must be some plea for forgiveness. There are other attributes in God besides mercy, infinite as that is,—

"A God all mercy is a God unjust."²

"Whosoever hath sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My book" (Ex. xxxii. 33), "The face of the Lord is against them that do evil" (Psa. xxxiv. 16), is the awful threatening of His truth. If there is to be any reconciliation between God and the sinner, there must be a reconciliation also between the attributes of the Divine Perfection. "Mercy and truth must meet together, right-

¹ M. Henry.

² Young's "Night Thoughts."

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eousness and peace must kiss each other" (Psa. lxxxv. 10). This prayer was the intercession of the great High Priest, and it is offered together with that all-availing Sacrifice which "taketh away the sin of the world." In Him God can be "just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom. iii. 26). But these men as yet believe not in Him. They are ignorant, and "the times of their ignorance" God can "wink at" (Acts xvii. 30). They may, through the intercession of their Divine Advocate, for this cause "obtain mercy, because they did it ignorantly in unbelief" (1 Tim. i. 13).

How comforting is the thought that our Lord offered this plea of extenuation as a plea for their forgiveness! How it assures us that He, who is to be the judge of all men, and to whom "the Father hath given authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man" (S. John v. 27), and "knows what is in man" (ii. 25), will be the first to advance any excuse which can legitimately be offered for those who must stand before His judgment-seat. "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 S. John ii. 1).

"*They know not.*" Ignorance has in all ages and in all countries been supposed to be some extenuation for evil.¹ And our Lord Himself recognizes and asserts the

¹ "Veniam dabit ignorantia culpæ" (Ovid. Her. 20. 189). συγγνωμον δ' ἐστὶ τὸ ἀκούσιον (Thucyd. iii. 40). Οὕτω καλὸς καὶ ἀγαθὸς ἦν ἐκεῖνος, ὥς καὶ ὅτε ἀποθνήσκειν ἤμελλε, προσκαλέσας με εἶπε· μήτε οὐ, ᾧ Τυγρῶνι, εἶφη, ὅτι ἀποκτενεῖ με, χαλεπήνῃς τῷ πατρὶ· οὐ γὰρ κακονοίᾳ τινὶ τοῦτο ποιεῖ ἀλλ' ἀγνοίᾳ· ὅποσα δὲ ἀγνοίᾳ ἄνθρωποι ἐξαμαρτάνουσιν, πάντα ἀκούσια ταῦτ' ἔγωγε νομίζω (Xen. Cyropæd. iii.). "Gravius lex agnita quam ignorata condemnat" (Fulgentius).

justice of this distinction between wilful sins and sins of ignorance, when He says, "that servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes: but he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more" (S. Luke xii. 47, 48). And in His parable of the Prodigal Son, whom He represents as having "come to himself," and as having been "dead," and "lost" (xv. 17-24), He implies that there is in all wickedness an element of aberration and insensibility, which, as it is the occasion, so in some sense it is an extenuation of sin, making it less wilful; and so Scripture speaks often, teaching us that sin is folly; as the Psalmist says, "Take heed, ye unwise among the people; oh, ye fools, when will ye understand?" (Psa. xciv. 8); and Job, "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding" (Job xxviii. 28). And so here, though our Lord could not deny that Pilate was unjust, the chief priests envious, the witnesses false, the people ungrateful, or the soldiers cruel, yet He leaves out, as a skilful pleader, all that can aggravate, and brings into prominence all that can extenuate their sins.¹

¹ "Facit hic Christus quod solent deprecatores; omisso quod in facto Judæorum erat accusandum, id refert quod ad minuendam aliquo modo culpam pertinebat" (Grotius). On Aristotle's well-known distinctions of offences into *ἀτυχήματα*, *ἁμαρτήματα*, and *ἀδικήματα*, Grotius remarks, "Judæorum hoc peccatum sicut nudum *ἀτύχημα* non erat; imo excedens etiam communem *ἀτυχημάτων* sortem, ita aliquid trahebat *ἐκ τοῦ ἀτυχήματος*, ob ignorantiam ei admixtam" (Ann. in lib. Evangel.).

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But where this plea cannot be offered, the sin becomes inexcusable. Alcimus, the high priest, "who had defiled himself wilfully, saw that by no means he could save himself, nor have any more access to the holy altar" (2 Macc. xiv. 3). For those who "sin wilfully after they have received the knowledge of the truth," and, continuing in their sin, finally apostatize from the faith in which they have been fully instructed, and which they have formerly professed, "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment" (Heb. x. 26, 27). "For it is impossible for those who are once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame" (vi. 4-6). So that "it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them" (2 S. Peter ii. 21). "If ye were blind," our Lord says, "ye should not have sin; but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth" (S. John ix. 41). "If I had not come and spoken unto them,¹ they had not had sin; but now they have no cloke for their sin" (xv. 22).

And in peril of like condemnation are they who, as

¹ οὐκοῦν δεῖ προσθεῖναι ἐλπίδα, ὥς συγγνώμην ἁμαρτιῶν ἀνθρωπείως λήψονται· ἄκουτες γὰρ οὐκ ἔβλαψαν, εἰδότες δὲ ἐπεβούλευσαν συγγνώμην δ' ἐστὶ τὸ ἀκούσιον (Thucyd. iii. 40). τοῖς γὰρ ἄκουσιν ἁμαρτοῦσι μέτεστι, συγγνώμης, οὐ τοῖς ἐπιβουλεύσασιν (Demosth. c. Timarch.).

S. Peter says, "willingly are ignorant" (2 Epist. iii. 5), of whom the Psalmist says, "They know not, neither will they understand (Psa. lxxxii. 5). There are some, such as S. Bernard says he knew, who, when they had known the truth had gone away sorrowful, because now the excuse of ignorance could no longer be theirs;¹ whereas, as Tertullian says, the true test of a sin of ignorance is whether, when we have learned its sinfulness, we repent and forsake it.² But for such as wilfully remain in ignorance, so that they may more unrestrainedly "continue in sin,"³ such ignorance, so far from mitigating, only aggravates their condemnation;⁴ for to be ignorant under opportunities of knowledge entails on them the charge of having rejected rather than of not having discovered the truth.⁵ And those with whom ignorance is thus their fault are, S. Paul says, "without excuse" (Rom. i. 20).

And there were some, we fear, among our Lord's enemies in whose behalf this plea of ignorance could not be offered. Such were they of whom our Lord Himself pronounced, "Now they have no cloke for their sin" (S. John xv. 22); who had known the truth, but had "held it back in unrighteousness" (Rom. i. 18); who had recognized the glory of His Divinity, as it flashed through the vail of His

¹ "Multos cognovi veritate agnitâ tristiores discessisse, quod jam ad ignorantiae excusationem se confugere non liceret" (in Cant. 74).

² "Simul ac desinunt ignorare, desinunt odisse."

³ "Ut liberius peccent, libenter ignorant" (S. Bernard). "Nolunt intelligere, ne cogantur et facere" (S. Augustine).

⁴ Hæc est summa delicti, nolle agnoscere quum ignorare non possis" (S. Cypr. de idol. van.).

⁵ "Sub scientiæ facultate nescire, repudiata magis quam non comperta veritatis est reatus" (S. Hil. in Psa. cxviii.).

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humanity, but, though they could say, "This is the Heir," could yet resolve, in their wickedness, "come, let us kill Him" (S. Mark xii. 7). And later, when the apostles had gone forth, preaching salvation through the Crucified One, and the Jewish people had "forsaken their own mercies" (Jonah ii. 8), and "put from them the word of God, and judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life" (Acts xiii. 46), S. Paul asks, "Have they not heard?" and answers the question, "Yes, verily;" and declares that in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, "All day long I have stretched forth my hand unto a disobedient and gainsaying people" (Rom. x. 18, 21); and yet, even of these, the same apostle testifies, "even unto this day, the vail is upon their heart" (2 Cor. iii. 15); and therefore, in a measure, it is true of the whole Jewish people, "they know not what they do." And if His most virulent enemies knew Him only as the Son of man, does not our Lord, in the same passage in which He declares that there is a sin which never shall be forgiven, and on the brink of which they certainly were, say, "Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him" (S. Matt. xii. 32)?

"*What.*" How little, truly, did His crucifiers know *what* it was they were doing! This one word covers the whole of eternity with the fulness of its meaning. We shall only be beginning to learn the alphabet of its significance when infinite ages shall have rolled away. Even those who persecute Christ's people know not how much of guilt and punishment they contract for themselves, or how great grace and what a crown of glory they help to bestow on those whom they seek to hurt. And so it was, only in an im-

measurably greater degree, here. As "Christ must suffer these things, and enter into His glory" (S. Luke xxiv. 26); as He must first "drink of the brook in the way," and then and "therefore" for ever "lift up His head" (Psa. cx. 7); and as He was "set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel" (S. Luke ii. 34);—so His enemies, though "in ignorance they did it," yet "those things which God before had showed by the mouth of all His prophets that Christ should suffer, He so fulfilled" (Acts iii. 17, 18). And that "same Jesus whom they slew and hanged on a tree, Him hath God exalted to His right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour" (v. 30, 31); and His exaltation, as it brings everlasting glory and happiness to Himself and His people, so must it bring everlasting confusion and destruction on all those who stumble against Him.¹ "It is something very frightful," says Tholuck, "to see a whole nation in the act of commencing to perpetrate a deed which, so long as it shall have a name upon the earth, will brand it with infamy in the eyes of men, and mark it with a curse before God, and all the while there is not one among them all that *knows what they do!* This was literally true of all these present. Not even the disciples, however much they knew of the Saviour, were in a condition to measure the full significance of the deed. There was only One who knew, in all its import, what was done—the Man upon the cross Himself!"² How wonderful was the self-possession which

¹ "Non enim sciunt quid faciunt," scilicet, bonum mihi et malum sibi. Revera ita est: quia qui alteri malum facit, nescit quantam poenam et culpam sibi inferat, quantamque gratiam et coronam alteri acquirat" (Ludolphus).

² "Light from the Cross," p. 208.

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our Lord manifested when He said these words, implying His perfect knowledge of the greatness of the guilt, and the consequences which this act involved !

"What." Which of us knows what he does, or how "great" is his "wickedness" in "sinning *against God*" (Gen. xxxix. 9), how blasphemously we insult His holiness, how presumptuously we provoke His justice, how sorely we strain His forbearance (as S. Paul says, that, in his case, to forgive his sin, although it was done ignorantly, Christ showed forth *all* long-suffering—1 Tim. i. 16), how much we retard His cause, how long we delay His Kingdom? Which of us knows, again, what he does among *his fellow-men*? The evil counsels we utter, the ill example we set, how, like some deadly infection, it spreads its pestilential influence, and ruins souls even that we have never known or seen! What secrets of the abiding and abounding influence of one evil life shall the great day disclose! And, further, which of us knows what he does in "sinning against *his own soul*" (Hab. ii. 10); how thereby he desecrates and defiles the sanctuary of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. iii. 16, 17), and profanes the members of Christ (vii. 15, 19); how he draws closer and deeper over his soul the shadows which make it impervious to the light of God's truth, and hardens it and makes it impenetrable to the influences of God's grace, and tempts God to "take His Holy Spirit from him" (Psa. li. 11), and to seal him up to reprobation and endless perdition?

Surely, of all sinners, of every class, of every clime, and of every age, much of their sin is through ignorance: the intemperate, the impure, the blasphemer, "know not *what* they do." They know not the love they slight, the happi-

ness they jeopardize, the misery they incur. They know not the hideousness of the sin they commit, for they see it disguised under the cloak of pleasure and self-gratification. "Be ye not like the horse and the mule, which have no understanding," the Psalmist says (Psa. xxxii. 9); and the confession of his own enlightened heart, as it looks back on the sin which it has left and forsaken, is, "So foolish was I, and ignorant; I was as a beast before Thee" (lxxiii. 22). And so Solomon says of all transgressors, that they are "fools," and "consider not that they do evil" (Eccles. v. 1). And yet there is a difference, nay, often all the difference, between a sin done ignorantly, and a sin done through ignorance—a distinction which Aristotle well defines, and Grotius so lucidly explains:¹ and this plea of ignorance can only be allowed when, if the ignorance be enlightened, the feet are turned into the way of truth, and repentance for the past is evidenced by reformation for the future. For all such there is hope in this prayer of Christ; it belongs to them, and they may offer this plea in conjunction with the intercession and merits of Christ, "I knew not what I did. Even in wilful sin, I knew not the enormity of my sin. I see it now. Kneeling at the foot of Thy cross, I see more of Thy love. I see my sins, stripped of their false covering, exceedingly sinful. Learning here to know my sinfulness, I mourn; but learning, also, Thy love and pity, I do not despair."²

¹ "Bene docuit Aristot. de Moribus, iii. ἕτερον εἶναι τὸ δι' ἄγνοiαν πράττειν τοῦ ἀγνοοῦντα ποιεῖν, nam quosdam esse qui ignorantes quidem peccent, sed non per ignorantiam, cujus rei evidens indicium si eos, re compertâ, facti non pœniteat" (Grotius, Annot. in lib. Evangel).

² J. E. Vernon.

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"*They do.*" More literally, "they are doing." This first word was spoken, probably, while the nails were being driven through His sacred hands and feet.¹ "They crucified Him: and Jesus said, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do (τί ποιοῦσιν)." This was the very crisis of this world; and His crucifixion was to be the test by which all ages should be sifted and tried; His cross was to be the centre of attraction to all mankind; thither they were to be drawn either for salvation or condemnation. This that these men "are doing" is riveting the eyes of the universe; and yet the doers know not what they are doing. The Crucified One has said, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me" (S. John xii. 31, 32). He is drawing us unto Him, while we stand beholding. Oh that He may so "draw us, that we may run after Him" (Cant. i. 4); and that, being "planted together in the likeness of His death, we may be also in the likeness of His resurrection" (Rom. vi. 5)!

Can we doubt that this prayer of Divine compassion was all-availing? "I knew," He says, "that Thou hearest Me always" (S. John xi. 42). He was God's "Beloved Son, in whom He is well pleased" (S. Matt. iii. 17), and the oblation of Himself which He was now offering drew towards Him, in a very special manner, His Father's love; as He Himself says, "Therefore does My Father love Me, because I lay down My life" (S. John x. 17). Could He, therefore, at such a time be denied anything that He asked? God had said, six hundred years before, "I sought for a man to

¹ Primum verbum fuit in actu crucifixionis" (Ludolphus).

stand in the gap, but I found none : therefore have I poured out Mine indignation upon them, I have consumed them in the fire of My wrath : their own way have I recompensed upon their heads" (Ezek. xxii. 30). But here is One who "maketh intercession for the transgressors" (Isa. liii. 12), and He maketh His prayer unto Him "in an acceptable time" (xlix. 8). Can we trace, then, any fulfilment of this prayer? Surely we can.

As it was offered for the *soldiers*, we see how it was answered on that very day, for "when the centurion and they that were with him watching Jesus, saw the earthquake and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God" (S. Matt. xxvii. 54). And we can well believe that this was no mere momentary conviction, but that it resulted in a lasting conversion. It is said that the centurion's name was Longinus, and that he suffered martyrdom at Cæsarea, in Cappadocia, of which place S. Gregory of Nyssa relates¹ that he was the first bishop.

As this prayer was offered for the *Romans*, the "kings of the earth who stood up, and the rulers who took counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed" (Psa. ii. 2 ; Acts ii. 25-7), it was promised long before, "Ask of Me, and I will give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance" (Psa. ii. 8) ; and the after conversion of that empire, and the success which since those days has been vouchsafed to missionary enterprise, are, probably, in great measure, attributable to the influence of this prayer. Within a very few

¹ Ep. xiii.

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years, the Church of Christ found a home at Rome, which became a centre of Gospel light and civilization to all the nations of the earth; and to this day she remains, if not so pure as in earlier times, at all events a defender and propagator of the faith of Him whom a Roman governor and Roman soldiers crucified and slew.

As the prayer was offered for the *Jewish people*, who so impiously had imprecated His blood on them and on their children (S. Matt. xxvii. 25), it was doubtless answered, inasmuch as the fierce anger of His Divine displeasure did not immediately destroy and desolate the guilty city, but gave them, for forty years, "space to repent," while the apostles proclaimed in their ears, in His name, the overtures of pardon and reconciliation with God,¹ which some of them, at least, accepted, and so drank by faith the Blood which they had shed in unbelief."² And surely, all His brethren after the flesh, the seed of Abraham, through all their after history, have a share in this prayer and its fulfilment. He who, as a patriot as well as a Saviour, wept over Jerusalem and her impending ruin, and who said, "Salvation is of the Jews" (S. John iv. 22), has no sympathy with the cruelties which have been perpetrated in His name on the people from which He sprang. The judgments of God have, indeed, according to prophecy, followed them ever since their rejec-

¹ "Illud autem εφες interpretandum ex simili oratione Stephani μή στήσης αὐτοῖς τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ταύτην: ne imputa, scilicet in hoc, ut poenitentiam illis præcludas festinato exitio aut plenissimâ obduratione" (Grotius).

² "Nec vero dubium est, quum a Patre cælesti exaudita fuit hæc precatio, hinc factum esse ut multi ex populo, quam fuderunt sanguinem fide postea biberent" (Calvin, in Harm. Evang. Comment.).

tion of His Son ; but He tells us, by His prophet Jeremiah, how sorely He will visit those who heap scorn and derision on the people of His choice : "All they that devour thee shall be devoured ; and all thine adversaries, every one of them, shall go into captivity ; and they that spoil thee shall be a spoil, and all that prey upon thee will I give for a prey" (xxx. 16). "I say then, God hath not cast away His people which He foreknew" (Rom. xi. 1, 2), "for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (ver. 29). "I am with thee, saith the Lord, to save thee : though I make an end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee" (Jer. xx. 11) ; and in the glories foretold for the Jewish people, in the last days, when they shall all come into the Gospel Kingdom, and be the most zealous and most successful preachers of the faith which for so many generations they have laboured to destroy, shall be doubtless fulfilled this dying prayer of the Saviour who "ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. vii. 25).

As it was offered for the *multitude*, which "had come together to that sight," and which gazed in indifference or contempt on his sufferings, surely it was answered in the case of some of those who, "beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned" (S. Luke xxiii. 48), and who possibly were among the number of those who, on the day of Pentecost, after listening to S. Peter, "were pricked in their hearts," and, at the apostle's exhortation, were baptized, and so made public profession of their faith in the Crucified One (Acts. ii. 37-41). Notably, also, was it fulfilled in the case of the penitent thief.

And that even the *chief priests and scribes* were not ex-

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empted from a share in the answer to this intercession, we may gather from the fact recorded by S. Luke, that, at the time of the ordination of the seven deacons, "a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts vi. 7).

And, in the fullest and widest sense, *all sinners* come within the compass of this prayer and its answer. The erring Christian, even, sinning against light and knowledge, and against Gospel and Sacramental grace, "denying in works" the Saviour whom he professes "to know" (Tit. i. 16), so far as his sins in any degree come under this category of sins of ignorance, whether from prejudice, or passion, or specious temptation, or an imperfect knowledge of the heinousness of sin, may hope to be included. As the arms of the crucified Saviour are stretched wide open, to welcome all who will avail themselves of His offered salvation, so this prayer is world-wide in its embrace, in its application, and in its efficacy.

We learn from this prayer certain general lessons :—

1. "There is a sin unto death" (1 S. John v. 16), a sin which "hath never forgiveness" (S. Mark iii. 29), a sin for which no plea can be advanced, and, therefore, for which no prayer can be offered. And every deliberate, wilful sin, is only an inferior degree of that sin which can never be "remitted," but must ever be "retained." If "the times of this ignorance God winked at, *now* He commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts xvii. 30). According to our opportunities are our responsibilities. "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required" (S. Luke xii. 48). Though God accepts us "according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not" (2 Cor. viii. 12), yet

“to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (S. James iv. 17). As, even in our Sunday-schools, the little children of the poorest and least educated are taught from their earliest years to say of Him “who suffered under Pontius Pilate, and was crucified,” “I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord,” we need to live carefully and circumspectly, lest “out of our own mouth we should be judged as wicked servants” (S. Luke xix. 22), and “by our own words we should be condemned” (S. Matt. xii. 37).

2. Even sins of ignorance are yet sins, and, as such, need to be forgiven. Under the Law, “if a soul sinned through ignorance against any of the commandments of the Lord concerning things which ought not to be done, and did against any of them,” he was commanded to bring his sin-offering to the priest, to make an atonement for him (Lev. iv.), and this, whether the offender was “the priest that was anointed,” (ver. 3), or “the whole congregation” (ver. 13), or “the ruler (ver. 22), or “any one of the common people” (ver. 27); for as greatness could not escape the censure, so meanness could not escape the cognizance of the Divine Law. The plea, “for they know not what they do,” does not make unnecessary the prayer, “Father, forgive them.” And if sins which we do not know thus require a sacrifice, how many, how numberless must be our sins of this kind! “Many an act has a deeper meaning than we know. Mary Magdalene was preparing her Lord’s body for the burying, when she broke her box; but it would seem she little thought how great a deed she was performing: she thought only to show her love and devotion, and

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give Him her all. So it may be we little know the sinfulness of our acts of ignorance and negligence. May not everything have a sacramental nature, now that Christ has taken upon Him our flesh? May not the least and most trivial actions of our daily life be hallowed by His having used and performed them; and so our irreverence extend beyond the mere distinctly religious services of private and public prayer?"¹ If sins of ignorance and shortcomings require a sacrifice, how great need have we to pray to Him who here prayed for us (and how great encouragement is given us to do it, from the fact that He *did* thus pray), "Oh, cleanse Thou me from my secret faults" (Psa. xix. 12); "That it may please Thee to forgive us all our sins, negligences, and ignorances; we beseech Thee to hear us, good Lord."

3. This dying prayer of our Lord is our pattern. As we stand beside His cross, and listen to His words, we must copy His example. So His saints have done in every age, returning angry words with soft answers, provocations with prayers, blows with blessings. His first martyr, S. Stephen, learned to love and bless his persecutors, and said, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" (Acts vii. 60). S. James, Bishop of Jerusalem, when he was hurled from the battlements of the temple, in the moment of death prayed for his murderers, "Lord, forgive them, for they know not what they do."² S. Paul writes of himself and his "companions in tribulation," "Being reviled, we bless" (1 Cor. iv. 12).

¹ Bishop Abraham's "Festival and Lenten Lectures."

² ἔθηκε τὰ γόνατα, λέγων, Παρακαλῶ, Κύριε, Θεέ Πατέρ, ἄφεσ αὐτοῖς, οὐ γὰρ οἶδασι τί ποιῶσι (Hegesipp. ap. Euseb. ii. 23).

S. Alphege, Archbishop of Canterbury (1012), being stoned to death, cried, as his soul was departing, "Jesus, receive me in peace, and forgive them." S. Engelbert, Archbishop of Cologne, being murdered by his enemies who lay in wait for him, prayed in the moment of death, "Father, forgive them." So we pray in the Litany, "That it may please Thee to forgive our enemies, persecutors, and slanderers, and to turn their hearts; we beseech Thee to hear us, good Lord." And as "when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son" (Rom. v. 10), so at our Lord's cross we should learn to forget our enmities and to forgive our enemies. "If a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away?" (1 Sam. xxiv. 19) may still be the maxim of the world; "I will be even with him," may be the dictate of nature: but "I will be above him," will be the resolve of charity, for "the discretion of a man deferreth his anger, and it is his glory to pass over a transgression" (Prov. xix. 11). The more we feel our own need of forgiveness, the more we shall seek a share for ourselves in this prayer of our Saviour; and the more, therefore, we shall try to reflect His spirit, and repeat His prayer.

"For me was that compassion,
For me that tender care;
I need His wide forgiveness
As much as any there.

"It was my pride and hardness
That hung Him on the tree:
Those cruel nails, O Saviour,
Were driven in by me.

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“And often I have slighted
Thy feeble voice that cried.
Forgive me, too, O Saviour,—
I knew not what I did.

“O depth of sweet compassion!
O Love divine and true!
Save Thou the souls that slight Thee,
And know not what they do.”

(Hymns Ancient and Modern.)

II.

Ἀμὴν λέγω σοι, σήμερον μετ' ἐμοῦ ἔσῃ ἐν τῇ Παράδεισῳ.

Amen dico tibi, Hodie mecum eris in Paradiso.

Verily I say unto thee, To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.—S. LUKE xxiii. 43.

HE who shall “come, as a thief”¹ (Rev. xvi. 15), to judge the world, is now, at this crisis of the world’s history which He calls “the judgment of this world” (S. John xii. 31), crucified between two thieves. But He makes His cross a judgment-throne.² In the midst between the two, “one on His right hand, and the other on His left,” He pronounces His sentence of pardon on the penitent, while He is ominously silent as to the doom of the impenitent, thief. Thus the cross of Christ is to us all, as it were, a tribunal, on one or other side of which we stand or fall: to some it

¹ Ἰδοὺ, ἔρχομαι ὡς κλέπτης.

² “Tamen et crux ipsa, si attendas, tribunal fuit: in medio enim iudice constituto, unus latro qui credidit liberatus, alter qui insultavit damnatus est. Jam significabat quod facturus est de vivis et mortuus, alios positurus ad dexteram, alios ad sinistram; similis ille latro futuris ad sinistram, similis alter futuris ad dexteram. Judicabatur, et iudicium minabatur” (St. Aug. in Joan. Evang., tract. xxxi.).

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is "the savour of life unto life," to others "the savour of death unto death" (2 Cor. ii. 16.). The grace of God offers salvation to all; but while some receive it, others reject it. Here is one in whom is fulfilled the old saying, that "opportunity makes the thief." Never had there been such an opportunity of salvation: never had there been one who had so eagerly embraced the opportunity of stealing a salvation.¹ In his case, surely, if in any, our Lord's words were true, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force" (S. Matt. xi. 12).²

Who was this thief? and what was the exact nature of his crime?

We are not told the name of either of these two thieves in the Gospels; but tradition has given us many legends concerning them, and the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus gives Dismas as the name of the penitent, and Gestas as that of the impenitent, thief. Bede, however, says that in his day Matha and Joca were supposed to have been their names. Of their history before we meet them here, we have no inspired record; but here, again, tradition tells us that, at the time of the flight into Egypt, the Holy Family were attacked by a band of robbers, and that one of them, to whom the name of Titus in this narrative is given, had compassion, and prevailed with his companion, Dumachus,

¹ Dr. Donne.

² "Hic latro, ut perveniret ad cœleste regnum, vim fecit majestati divinæ, non corporeâ virtute vincens, sed fide. Sic Ipse Dominus in Evangelio dicit, 'Regnum cœlorum vim patitur, et violenti diripiunt illud.' Quid ultra violentius quam latro?" (S. Aug. Sermon. lx. de sec. feriâ Pasch.).

to spare them; and the infant Christ foretold that thirty years later Titus should be crucified with Him, and should go before Him to Paradise. S. Augustine suggests that this penitent thief is alluded to in the parable of the Prodigal son.¹

There has been much discussion as to the nature of his crime. The word *λῃστής*, which is used by SS. Matthew and Mark, has other meanings besides that of "thief" or "robber," and it is difficult to specify in what sense he was a *κακούργος*, as S. Luke styles him. From the narrative of the Evangelists, we may gather that he was one of those insurrectionists who, partly, perhaps, from motives of plunder, but partly also from a blind patriotic zeal, had rebelled against the Roman Government, lending himself as an instrument to one like Barabbas, or Theudas, or Judas of Galilee, or other movers of sedition, who, on the plea of personating the promised Christ, "drew away much people after them" (Acts v. 36, 37).

Opinion is divided as to whether he was a Jew or a Gentile. Bengel thinks the latter, and it has been observed by Blackwell that his words, "Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?"² are the purest Greek to be found in the Gospels. To this the forcible objection seems fatal, that in this case our Lord would probably not have spoken of Paradise to a Gentile,

¹ "Quis est iste filius perditus qui omnem substantiam paternam in meretricibus erogavit, nisi ille latro qui substantiam a Deo datam per scelera diffluendo, etiam in cruce pendit?" (S. Aug. de temp. barb. vii.)

² οὐδὲ φοβῆ σὺ τὸν Θεόν, ὅτι ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ κρίματι εἶ;

while it would have been quite intelligible and full of consolation to a Jew.

It is also uncertain how long he had been convicted and condemned prior to his execution. It was no uncommon thing among the Jews for a felon to be committed to prison and left there for an indefinite period, as was the case with Joseph in Egypt, who was "two full years" in the prison (Gen. xli. 1) even after the chief butler was restored to his office; it was so likewise with Jeremiah (xxxvii. 21), and S. John the Baptist. This matter is important, as bearing on the question whether this man had any (and if so, what) previous knowledge of Christ. Bengel and Rosenmüller conjecture that in the prison he had been instructed in the faith of Christ, and was thus prepared for his profession of discipleship. The former thinks that he may have heard our Lord preach; but this opinion is hardly tenable, except under the supposition that it was only the impenitent thief who reviled our Lord upon the cross. Euthymius and Grotius think that he had heard our Lord before Pilate, when the question was asked, "Art thou a king then?" assert the fact, and explain the sphere, of His sovereignty.¹ Stier suggests that his conviction and confession sprang from reading the title upon the Saviour's cross; Theophylact, that it arose from hearing our Lord's prayer for His enemies; but Bellarmine says this opinion is evidently at variance with the Gospel narratives, as it was not till after that prayer that the thief or thieves began to revile. Origen thinks that it was from the awe inspired by the super-

¹ "Audierat, ut credibile est, profitentem Jesum sibi regnum debere, sed non hujus mundi" (Grotius, *Ann. in lib. Evang.*).

natural darkness, which S. Luke associates closely with this confession, especially if the reading of Tischendorf is correct, who adds ἦδῃ after ἦν in the next verse.

It has been also much disputed, seeing "baptism is generally necessary to salvation," whether (and, if so, when and how) this thief was baptized. Some have thought that he was baptized in prison, as in times of persecution many were, or even before his imprisonment;¹ others have thought that he was not baptized with water at all, never having seen or heard of Christ, or received instruction about Him or His doctrine. So Donne says, "As soon as God afforded him any call, he came;" and S. Gregory, that he was converted as soon as called.² Those who adopt this view maintain that he, who thus, as a martyr, confessed Christ at a time when those who should afterwards be martyrs forsook and despaired of Him, was baptized with the baptism of blood;³ or that when, after our Lord's death, one of the soldiers, with a spear, pierced His side, and forth-

¹ "Quid si in carcere fuerat baptizatus, quod et postea persecutionis tempore nonnulli clanculo impetrare potuerunt? Quid si et antequam teneretur?" (S. Aug. De Animâ, lib. iii.)

² "Non in fine, sed in principio conversus." So S. Aug., "Latro ille non ante crucem Domini sectator, sed in cruce confessor" (De Animâ, lib. i.); but he afterwards retracts this opinion.

³ "A Cypriano sancto inter martyres computatur qui suo sanguine baptizantur, quod plerisque non baptizatis, fervente persecutione, provenit. . . . Inventa est in eo mensura martyris, qui tunc in Christum credidit, quando deficerent qui futuri erant martyres. Et hoc quidem oculis Domini clarum fuit, qui non baptizato, tanquam martyrii sanguine abluto, tantam felicitatem contulit" (S. Aug. De Animâ, lib. i.).

"Baptismum sanguinis perfusione protinus acquisivit, et cum Domino in Paradisum purpuratus confessor intravit" (S. Bern. De Pœnit, lib. i.).

with came there out blood and water (S. John xix. 34), this thief who was crucified close beside Him was sprinkled by that sacred stream as it issued from His side.¹

There is also a wide difference of opinion as to whether he, as well as his brother in crime and punishment, reviled and mocked the crucified Saviour. S. Luke says, "One of the malefactors which were hanged railed on Him," whereas SS. Matthew and Mark say, "The thieves which were crucified with Him reviled Him." But, as S. Augustine observes, it is common in the Holy Scriptures to use the plural for the singular ; so that there is not necessarily any discrepancy between the sacred writers. Bellarmine aptly illustrates this usage by the instances, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, of those heroes of faith, of whom it is said that they "stopped the mouths of lions," and "were sawn asunder" (xi. 33, 37) ; though, as far as we know, it was only Daniel who was subjected to the former, and Isaiah to the latter, form of martyrdom. A similar apparent discrepancy is noticeable in the narrative of the miraculous feeding of the five thousand, if we compare S. Matt. xiv. 17 with S. John vi. 9. Of the Fathers, Origen, Athanasius, Cyril of Jerusalem, Hilary, Jerome, Chrysostom, Theophylact, and Euthymius, are in favour of the literal acceptance of the words of SS. Matthew and Mark, while Epiphanius and Augustine advocate the literal acceptance of S. Luke's narrative. It would seem to be the more reverent to accept all the three records as strictly true, and

¹ "Non incredibiter dicitur, latronem qui tunc credidit, juxta Dominum crucifixum, aquâ illâ quæ de vulnere lateris ejus emicuit, tanquam Sacramento Baptismi fuisse perfusum" (S. Aug. De Animâ, lib. i.).

to understand that at first both the thieves joined in the mocking of their Fellow-sufferer, but that one repented and believed when he saw the majesty, the meekness, and the mercy of the Saviour.

But, however such questions may be met, there is enough in the narrative of S. Luke to show that the confession which elicited this answer of our Lord was most remarkable, whatever were the antecedents, remote or immediate, or whatever was the instrumentality, direct or indirect, which prompted his confession and his prayer, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom."

There was in this confession—

1. Repentance, which was evidenced in three particulars: First, in his confession of his own demerit; "And we indeed," are in condemnation "justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds;" and as he thus so entirely and unreservedly "confessed his sins, Christ was faithful and just to forgive him his sins, and to cleanse him from all unrighteousness" (1 S. John i. 9).¹ Secondly, in his profession of the innocence of Christ, and of his own discipleship; "But this man hath done nothing amiss;" and then, turning to Christ, he calls Him "Lord." Thirdly, in his humility; "Remember me."²

2. Faith, and such faith as, perhaps, considering all the circumstances, has never been equalled, certainly has never

¹ "Confessione effudit ex se saniem, et factus est aptus cibo Domini; exclusit iniquitatem suam; accusavit eam, et caruit eâ" (S. Aug. Enarr. i. in Psa. lxviii.).

² "Memento mei!" O cor contritum et humiliatum! Quid minus vel humilior potuit orari quam ut vel sui memor esset? (S. Bern. Med. in Pass. Dom. cap. vi.).

been excelled.¹ The rulers who had crucified Him had seen His miracles, and yet recognized Him not as the Christ; but this thief acknowledged Him, though He was hanging beside him on a cross, dying as a malefactor.² Even His own disciples stumbled through unbelief, who had seen Him raise the dead; he believed, though he saw Him dying beside him.³ "What fruit," says S. Augustine, "Christ obtained from a dry tree!"⁴ They had had the advantage of our Lord's own teaching, and yet their faith in their Master was so small, that two of them could say, as if all hope were now over, "We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel"⁵ (S. Luke xxiv. 21). This man, with no such advantages, adores Christ as a King

¹ "Magna fides: huic fidei quid addi potest ignoro" (S. Aug. Serm. cccxxii.).

"Nescio an a mundo condito magis rarum et memorabile fidei exemplum unquam exstiterit, quo majori admiratione digna est Spiritus Sancti gratia, quæ tam luculente hic se exseruit" (Calvin).

² "Illi non cognoverunt miracula facientem: agnovit ille in ligno pendentem" (S. Aug. Enarr. in Ps. xxxix.).

"Non viderat prius miracula . . . et tamen Dominum confitetur ut Regem, quem videt supplicii sui esse consortem" (S. Leonis Magni, Serm. liii.).

³ "Tunc vero latro vidit et credidit, cum fides apostolica trepidavit" (S. Aug. Serm. lx. de sec. feriâ Pasch.).

⁴ Titubaverunt ipsi qui viderunt Christum mortuos suscitantem; credidit ille qui videbat secum in ligno pendentem. Quando illi titubaverunt, tunc ille credidit. Quantum fructum Christus de arido ligno percepit" (S. Aug. Serm. cccxxii.).

⁵ "Non solum credebat resurrecturum, sed etiam regnaturum. Pendenti, crucifixo, cruento, hærenti, 'cum veneris,' inquit, 'in regnum tuum;' et illi, 'Nos sperabamus;' ubi spem latro invenit, discipulus perdidit" (Ibid.).

"A latrone apostoli victi sunt, qui tunc credidit, quando illi deferunt" (S. Aug. Enarr. in Ps. lxxviii.).

when suffering on the cross, makes mention of His kingdom when He is in the utmost humiliation, and declares Him to be the Author of Life, when He is suffering all the agonies of a cruel and shameful death.¹ And for these reasons S. Augustine declares that his faith surpassed that even of the most illustrious patriarchs and prophets, the father of the faithful himself not excepted. Abraham, he says, believed God, but it was when God spake to him from heaven (Gen. xxii. 15). Moses believed God, but it was when God spake to him from the burning bush (Ex. iii. 4); and with such accompaniments of terror and majesty that even the faithless were provoked to believe (xx. 18). Isaiah believed God, but it was when he saw Him sitting on His throne, high and lifted up, while before Him stood the seraphim, extolling his perfections (Isa. vi. 1-3). Ezekiel believed, but it was when he saw Him sitting over against the cherubim (Ezek. x. 1). Zechariah believed God, but it was when he saw the Lord sitting as a priest upon His throne (Zech. vi. 12, 13). But this thief saw the Lord indeed, but "numbered with the transgressors" (Isa. liii. 12), and yet prayed to Him as if in glory; on the cross, but worshipped Him as though sitting in heaven; condemned, but invoked Him as an exalted King.²

¹ "Latro, qui non modo in Christi scholâ non edoctus fuerat, sed se nefandis cædibus efferando conatus fuerat extinguere omnem recti sensum, repente altius penetrat quam apostoli omnes et reliqui discipuli, in quibus docendis tantum operæ consumpserat ipse Dominus; neque id modo, sed Christum in patibulo Regem adorat, regnum ejus celebrat in horrendâ et plusquam deformi abjectione: moribundum, pronunciat vitæ auctorem" (Calvin).

² S. Aug. Hom. lx. de sec. fer Pasch.

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3. Hope. This virtue also the penitent thief exercised, saying, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into (or in) Thy kingdom"¹—a petition corresponding to that of Joseph, who was left in prison when the chief butler was about to be restored to his place. "Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thine head, and restore thee unto thy place. . . . But think on me when it shall be well with thee, and show lovingkindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house. . . . Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgat him" (Gen. xl. 13-23). Not so fared this poor thief with our Lord; such hope as his "maketh not ashamed" (Rom. v. 5). "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit" (Jer. xvii. 7, 8).

4. Charity. This other cardinal theological virtue the dying thief displayed.² This he showed in his rebuke of his fellow-thief, "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?" He was so circumstanced that he

¹ "ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ σου, pro eis τὴν βασιλείαν σου" quæ harum præpositionum in N. T. et alibi frequens est permutatio" (Wolfii, Curæ Philol. Critic. in Evang. S. Luc.). Our translators have rightly rendered the parallel passage, *ὅταν δὲ ἔλθῃ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐν τῇ δόξῃ αὐτοῦ* "in His glory" (S. Matt. xxv. 31).

² Quis non consideret quantâ fide, quantâ spe, quantâ charitate mortem pro Christo vivente suscipere potuerit, qui vitam in moriente quæsit" (S. Aug. De Animâ, lib. i.).

could do nothing for his companion but give him advice, and show him the good example of his own repentance and faith, and urge him to rest his hope where he had fixed his own. But in doing this he "did what he could," and manifested that charity to the soul which is the soul of charity.

"Seeing this thief," let us "consent unto him" (Psa. l. 18).

It has been necessary to make these preliminary remarks on the circumstances which elicited this second saying of our Lord, that we may more fully enter into the meaning of the saying itself, which we may now proceed to examine. "Verily I say unto thee, To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise."

"*Verily.*" This is the Amen of Him who is Himself "the Amen, the faithful and true witness" (Rev. iii. 14); and in whom "all the promises of God are Amen" (2 Cor. i. 20). As in His ministry He was wont to set this seal (which S. Augustine calls His oath)¹ to the most solemn of His sayings, both for the sake of a greater emphasis, and for a greater confirmation; so now He answers this poor thief's confession and prayer with His Amen, signifying thereby that He was indeed all that the thief had professed, and that He would indeed perform all that he had petitioned. Bellarmine has well said, that there were three things in this promise of our Lord which might have staggered the faith of this penitent; and that our Lord gave this solemn asseveration to settle every such doubt. There was, first, the sense of his own unworthiness to receive so great a boon.

¹ "Quodammodo, si dici fas est, juratio ejus est 'Amen, Amen, dico vobis'" (S. Aug. Tract. i. in Joan.).

Secondly, there were the circumstances of humiliation in which our Lord was when He gave so precious a promise. Thirdly, there was the unspeakable greatness of the promise itself. So Christ, "willing to show unto this heir of faith the immutability of His counsels, confirmed it with an oath," that thus he "might have a strong consolation, who had fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before him" (Heb. vi. 17, 18).

"*I say.*" Before Pilate, before Caiaphas, before the mocking multitude, our Lord had been silent. They asked Him many things, but He answered nothing, because they did not ask aright; but to this poor thief He most readily unseals His lips, and gives him an answer of peace.¹ To all the jeers and insults of His enemies He had been "as a deaf man, and heard not; and as one that is dumb, who doth not open his mouth" (Psa. xxxviii. 13); but to the prayer of faith He immediately replies.² This poor thief had nothing free but his heart and mouth, his other members being nailed to the tree of crucifixion; but as with these he acknowledges Christ, "with the heart believing, with the mouth confessing"³ (Rom. x. 10); so Christ acknowledges his confession,

¹ "Penitus non erat locutus Christus neque Pilato, neque principibus Judæorum. Labia puritatis respondere nolebant, quia non recte inimici quærebant. Respondit latroni libenter quia rogavit simpliciter" (S. Aug. Serm. lii. De Pass. Dom.).

² "Qui ad convitia surdus erat et mutus, orationi credentis incunctanter respondit" (Lucas Brugensis).

³ "Latro justificatus est, qui defixis in cruce omnibus membris, et habens libera hæc duo, corde credidit ad justitiam, ore confessus est ad salutem: statimque audire meruit, 'Hodic mecum eris in Paradiso'" (S. Aug. De Divers. Quæst. ad Supplician. lib. i.).

So also Greg. Moral. xviii., and S. Aug. Enarr. in Psa. lxxviii.

and accepts the faith which He Himself had given,¹ and answers his prayer. And as His first word had been a prayer, so His second is a promise; as in the first He exercised His Priestly, so in the second, His Kingly, office; as His first word was spoken for forgiveness of sins of ignorance, so His second, for forgiveness of wilful sin. And so great and majestic are His words that, "if they were the only testimony which Jesus had given of Himself, they would for ever decide the question who He was; words which, bursting the bonds of death, and opening a heaven of consolation, have sounded like a peaceful chord of Paradise in the ears of millions on their dying beds; and may they also sound in our ears, when our feet tread the gloomy way!"²

"*Unto thee.*" Did not our Lord here insinuate how readily He would accept and welcome the other thief, and show him the like mercy if he would show the like faith? And does not He promise to all ages of the world that He will "not despise the sighing of a contrite heart, nor the desire of such as be sorrowful"?

But surely there is also a solemn warning underlying these sweet words of encouragement: "Verily I say *unto thee.*" It is a special case; and, as Archbishop Sutton says, "the privilege of a few, much less that of one, infers not a common case for all." It would be to "turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness" (S. Jude 4), and to "let our table be made a snare unto us, and the things which should have been for our wealth to be unto us an occasion of falling"

¹ "Credidit, propter quod locutus est. Sed et ipsam fidem quis donavit, nisi qui juxta pependit?" (S. Aug. Enarr. in Psa. lxxviii.).

² Krummacher.

(Psa. lxi. 23), if we so perverted this saying of Christ as to make it a warrant for delaying our repentance. He who promises pardon to the penitent, has not promised space of repentance to those who presume to postpone it.¹ The familiar saying is full of wisdom, "One sinner is converted at the hour of death, that we may hope; and but one, that we may fear."² To put off to old age or to a dying bed the work of our repentance is, at the best, a venture of the most utter madness. When the will, ever irresolute for good, has long been fixed upon evil; when the "hands hang down, and the knees are feeble" (Heb. xii. 12); when the days are short, and the roads are heavy, this cannot be a fit time for repentance. "Pray ye that your flight be *not* in the winter" (S. Matt. xxiv. 20). And as for a dying bed, we may never have one; or we may be utterly incapacitated in mind and body for any recollection of the past or resolution for the future; or the pains of sickness and prostration may fully occupy our every thought and feeling; or God may refuse to accept the dregs of our life, and may "laugh at our calamity, and mock when our fear cometh" (Prov. i. 26). We are told of one Marcus Caius Victorinus, a very aged man, who, in time of persecution, was converted from heathenism to Christianity, that when he came to Simplicianus, and told him that he heartily owned and embraced the faith of Christ, neither he nor the Church would for a long time receive him, because it was so unusual for a

¹ "Qui promisit pœnitenti veniam non promisit pœnitendihoram. Qui pœnitenti misericordiam promisit, peccanti non crastinum promisit" (S. Aug. De Verb. Dom. 59).

² Quesnel.

convert to be made in old age. And when, after he had given good evidence of the genuineness and sincerity of his faith, he was at length received into the Church, the people everywhere cried, "Marcus Caius Victorinus is become a Christian!" so marvellous did so late a conversion appear. Though with God all things are possible, sudden conversions are by no means the rule, but very special and extraordinary exceptions, and at all times a matter for serious suspicion. Bishop Andrewes says, "Never trust a repentance repentine, no sudden flash or brunt. It is altogether an error to think repentance is a matter of no more moment than to be despatched in a moment." M. Henry says, "Though it is certain that true repentance is never too late, it is as certain that late repentance is seldom true." There is something not only miraculous, but—if we may say so—something monstrous also, in the case of those who are converted at the very last. To use the quaint simile of Ludolphus, "it is as monstrous for a bad life to finish with a good end as it would be for a wolf to have a lamb's tail."¹ It is true that while there is life there is hope;² and here is an undoubted case of a dying sinner plucked, at the last moment, "as a brand from the burning" (Amos iv. 11). Yet the words of Christ give the rule to which this is so striking an exception, "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of

¹ "Pauci sunt qui in morte vere poeniteant. Nam sicut monstruosum esset, quod lupus caudam ovis haberet, ita monstruosum videtur quod vita mala bono fine claudatur."

² "Ægroto dum anima est, spes esse dicitur" (Cic. ad Attic. l. 9, ep. 12).

"De nemine desperandum, quem patientia Divina sinit vivere" (S. Aug.).

thistles?" (S. Matt. vii. 16). It was a miracle when Aaron's rod, in one and the same night, "was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds" (Num. xvii. 8); and no less miraculous was this sudden and late fruitfulness in the dry tree of the thief's life. Kings at their coronation, "in the day of the gladness of their heart," are wont to grant extraordinary dispensations, and to signalize their entrance on their kingly power by pardoning malefactors, and releasing them from the prisons where they have long been confined; but at ordinary times the course of justice is not interrupted by any such extraordinary mercies. And so this malefactor obtained at this time a special favour, which is not to be expected, certainly not to be reckoned on, by other malefactors in ordinary times. "When thou canst find such another day," says Dr. Donne, "look for such another mercy. When there is such another opportunity, there may be such another thief."

"To-day." We may observe here the foreknowledge of our Lord. The crucified often hung for many days on the cross, before death terminated their sufferings. And in the case of these two thieves, their pains would probably have been thus protracted; for we are told that, to hasten their end, "the soldiers brake their legs" (S. John xix. 32), and in the case of our Lord, "Pilate marvelled if He were already dead" (S. Mark xv. 44) when the even was come. But our Lord said decisively that both He and the penitent thief should end their sufferings that day, "Verily I say unto thee, To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise."

"To-day." The thief had asked to be remembered when Christ came into His kingdom—at some distant period in

the future. Our Lord promises him that "to-day" shall be the happy day of his deliverance and redemption. The thief was content to suffer now, and after death also to "receive the due reward of his deeds," if he might hope that, at some indefinite time, he might be remembered and released. Our Lord tells him that there shall be no long delay, but an immediate answer to his prayer; that with His bleeding hand He will open to him the gates of Paradise.¹ The dying Saviour's grace is more abundant than the dying sinner's prayer, as He is ever wont to give more than we desire or deserve; nay, "above all that we ask or think" (Eph. iii. 20).²

"To-day." We learn from this word that the "Paradise" here promised was not heaven,³ for thither "the man Christ Jesus" did not go till forty-three days later; but "to-day," as He went to the sepulchre in His body, so He went to Hades in His soul. Into the heavenly Paradise no soul had entered before Christ ascended thither (S. John iii. 13).

¹ " 'Memento,' inquit, 'mei;' non modo, sed quum veneris in regnum tuum! Multa, inquit, mala feci; requiem celerem non mihi spero: sufficient tormenta mea usque ad adventum tuum. Modo torquar; cum veneris, tunc mihi parce. Ille se differebat, sed Christus Paradisum non petenti offerebat" (S. Aug. Sermon. cccxxvii.).

"Tu differs te; ego agnosco te. . . non te differo: tantæ fidei hodie reddo quod debes" (Ibid. Sermon. ccxxxii.).

² "Uberior est gratia quam precatio; semper enim Dominus plus tribuit quam precatur" (S. Ambrose, Exposition. Evangel. secundum Lucam lib. x.).

³ "Non ex his verbis in cœlo existimandus est Paradisus. Neque enim ipso die in cœlo futurus erat Homo Christus Jesus; sed in inferis secundum animam, in sepulchro autem secundum carnem" (S. Aug. Epistolæ. lvi. ad Dardanum).

"Si Paradisum nominemus, locum divinæ amœnitatis recipiendis Sanctorum spiritibus, non cœlum intelligimus" (Tertullianus. Apolog.).

"To-day." This shows us also that there is no such place or process as that of Purgatory awaiting the soul after its departure hence.¹ "The souls of the righteous, after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh, are in joy and felicity with God." If Lazarus dies, he is at once "carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom" (S. Luke xvi. 22). If S. Paul departs, he is at once "with Christ" (Phil. i. 23). "The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them" (Wisd. iii. 1). "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours" (Rev. xiv. 13).

"To-day." There were some, in days gone by, who sought to invalidate the doctrine of our Lord's descent into hell, and all the blessed truths which depend upon it, by altering the received punctuation, and rendering these words as if the "to-day" referred not to the promise itself but to the time when the promise was given, "Verily I say unto thee to-day."² So taught Marcion, the Photinians, and others; an opinion combated by Origen, Theophylact, and more modern apologists, as Mill and Olshausen.

Some have thought that the "to-day" is not a note of time, but a particle of asseveration, which would involve a certain degree of tautology; as a solemn asseveration has already been made in the "*Verily* I say unto thee."³

¹ "Recte hæc verba ad extinguendum Purgatorium adhiberi," ostendit B. Raithius in Vindiciis Versionis B. Lutheri, p. 409" (Wolfii, Curæ Philol. et Critic.).

² Wolfii, Curæ Philol. et Critic. in Evang. S. Luc.

³ "Smalcus contendit *τὸ ἁδὴ* hic non esse notam temporis, sed potius particulam asseverandi, atque idem inferre quod Latine dixeris, *certo*.

Grotius explains it as adding to the greatness of the promise which follows,¹ as in Jer. i. 10, "See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms," when, at the time, Jeremiah was a poor despised priest, and yet a child in his own estimation (ver. 6).

"*Thou.*" There is an ominous silence as to the place where the other thief should be "to-day." The dying words of Adrian, "O animula vagula, blandula, heu! quo vadis?" are typical of the sad forebodings of the impenitent as they descend into the dark valley. And to the sceptic, who has lived and died in the rejection of Christ, and who spurns the idea of an eternal world and its awful realities, how chill and gloomy must be his feelings as he leaves this world for a state, as he professes to imagine, of annihilation at the best!

"*Thou.*" How great is the favour accorded to this penitent confessor! To the Jews He had said, "Where I am, thither ye cannot come" (S. John vii. 34). To His own chiefest disciple He had said, "Whither I go thou canst not follow Me now" (xiii. 36). Even to His virgin mother no such favour is vouchsafed. But to the thief He declares, "To-day *thou*² shalt be with Me in Paradise."

"*Shalt be.*" Then death is not a state of annihilation.

Sed lege, contra, Hackspanium in Notis ad h. l. p. 373, qui inter cætera observat, hoc modo Christo, hæc loquenti, *ταυτολογίαν* impingi cum asseveratio ista jam in voce *ἀμὴν* comprehendatur" (Wolfii, Curæ Philol. et Critic. in Evang. S. Luc.).

¹ "Est autem illud 'hodie,' *ἐμφατικὸν* et solet beneficiorum mentioni adjici, ut Jerem. i. 10" (Ann. in Libros Evang.).

² There is, it is true, no such emphatic "thou" in the original; but it is involved in the *σοι* which precedes, and in the *ἐσθ* which follows.

"God is not a God of the dead, but of the living : for all live unto Him " (S. Luke xx. 38). Neither is it a state of torpor and insensibility. We might well indeed "refuse to be comforted " in our bereavements, if all that we could say of our departed loved ones were, "They are not." But no ; they and we "shall be." Our being is neither annihilated nor suspended by death. Even in the very hour of our death, though the soul shall be separated from the body, it shall retain its faculties and powers ; nay, perhaps shall then first learn how great they are, and how free their exercise when sublimated, by the refining process of death, from all the grossness and freed from all the fetters of the body. And the body, though dead, shall yet retain in itself the germ of its future life, and our "perfect consummation and bliss" shall be "both in body and soul," which "shall be " for ever hereafter, through all the eternity of the great "I Am."

"*With Me.*" How clear was the consciousness of holy innocence ; and how great the triumph of faith in this assertion of our Lord ! Though He was dying as a malefactor, "rejected of men," and though He was "smitten of God, and afflicted " (Isa. liii. 3, 4, 10) ; though His sun seemed to go down while it was yet day, and all the present was veiled with humiliation, and the future seemed draped with gloom, yet He was certain that "to-day " He should be "in Paradise."

"*With Me.*" To this poor thief, who had prayed to be "remembered," our Lord says there shall be no need for Him to remember him. We remember the absent, but "thou shalt be present with Me—not a day separated from Me." A blessed thought of comfort this for a dying sinner ! "If

I go down to hell, Thou art there" (Psa. cxxxix. 7). If we sometimes shrink from that first step into an unknown world, the conditions, the inhabitants, the occupations of which will be so strange to us, it is a comfort to know that He, our best Friend, "whom having not seen, we love" (1 S. Peter i. 8), will be there to greet and welcome us, and that in Him we shall have communion with all those whom we shall find there, not as strangers, but as brethren.

"Thou shalt be with Me." It has been observed that this is more than a promise of society with Christ; it is also a declaration of a happy intimacy with Him, and an honoured reception by Him. The phrase is often used in Greek literature to express an invitation to a feast or banquet, as in Jud. xiv. 10, 11, "Samson made them a feast, for so used the young men to do. And it came to pass, when they saw him, that they brought thirty companions to be with him."¹

"With Me." This is Paradise itself, thus to be with Christ, who Himself is Paradise, as Ludolphus says.² Though the intermediate state of the blessed is not heaven, yet it must be a place of rest and refreshment, of honour and dignity, of light and joy, if it is "to be with Christ." And though much of obscurity still rests over the intermediate state, yet it is enough for all Christ's people, that they shall be with Him and He with them. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me" (Psa. xxiii. 4). Wherever He may choose to lead His servants, there they

¹ ἔλαβον τριάκοντα κλητοὺς, καὶ ἦσαν μετ' αὐτοῦ (LXX.). So in Aristoph. *Aves*, ὅπως, παρέσει μοι, καὶ σὺ καὶ τὰ παῖδιά.

² "Ubi est Christus Qui est Paradisus, ibi est et Paradisus."

gladly follow Him, so long as they have His continued presence.¹ "If Thou go not, carry us not up hence." But if the promise be given, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest" (Ex. xxxiii. 14, 15), that is all-sufficient. To be with Him is heaven begun; for "in His presence is the fulness of joy" (Psa. xvi. 11). Our Lord asks for His disciples, "that they may be with Me where I am" (S. John xvii. 24). He proposes this as the greatest reward to His servants, "Where I am, there shall also My servant be" (xii. 26); and the Apostle, who had been caught up into Paradise and into heaven, sums up all heaven's blessedness in those few words, "So shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. iv. 17).

But "with Me"—where? As Tholuck says, "Who does not listen with strained attention for the answer? Where, oh, where are the souls of the holy among men, after the last sigh has died in their breast, and the last fight has been fought?"² Who has not asked the question of Job, and longed for a solution to it, "Man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and *where* is he?" (Job xiv. 10)? This question our Lord answers; but even the answer is for the present necessarily obscure. "Thou shalt be with Me *in Paradise*."

"*In Paradise*." The word "Paradise" is generally regarded as of Persian, but it is also claimed as of Armenian,

¹ "Ubi tu vis, et ubi tu es, ibi est Paradisus; et esse tecum, hoc est esse in Paradiso" (S. Anselm). "Vita est enim esse cum Christo: ideo ubi Christus, ibi vita, ibi regnum" (S. Ambrose, Exp. Evang. sec. Luc. lib. x.).

² "Light from the Cross," p. 223.

origin, in which latter language it signifies a garden close to a house, and planted with grasses, herbs, and flowers.¹ It is used by Xenophon (Cyr. i. 3, 12) to import a park or garden; also, in the same sense, by Herodotus and Diodorus. In the Hebrew text of the Scriptures it is used three times (Neh. ii. 8; Eccles. ii. 5; and Cant. iv. 13), and is translated in the A. V. by the terms "forest" and "orchard;" and in the LXX. it is used for the garden of Eden (Gen. ii. 8-10, 15, 16. iii. 1-3, etc.). Josephus employs it (Ant. xviii. 1), to signify the place of rest and happiness where the blessed dead are in the interval before the final consummation of all things. In the New Testament the word is used in two other places besides this, viz., 2 Cor. xii. 4 and Rev. ii. 7.

Much has been written, but, necessarily, little is really known, on this subject. To this, as to so many other mysteries, the actual experiences of death will give us the longed-for key.

The *Pagan* belief is given to us in the well-known passages of the "Odyssey" (xi.) and the "Æneid" (vi.);² according to

¹ "Vocem hanc pro Persicâ plerique omnes habent. At Cl. Schroderus in Dissert. Præviâ ad Thesaurum Armenicum, p. 56, ex Armenicâ linguâ mavult repetere, in quâ inferat hortum domui semper proximum, graminibusque, et herbis, et floribus consitam" (Wolfii, Curæ Philol. et Critic.).

² "Hic locus est, partes ubi se via findit in ambas :
Dextera quæ Ditis magni sub moenia tendit,
Hac iter Elysium nobis ; at læva malorum
Exercet poenas, et ad impia Tartara mittit."

(Æn. vi. 540-3.)

καὶ γὰρ καθ' Αἴθην δύο τριβούς νομιζομεν,
μίαν δικαίων, κατέραν ἀσεβῶν ὁδόν.

(Diphilus, quoted by Grotius.)

which, under the general name of Hades, or the Unseen, are comprised the two divisions, of Elysium, the place of happiness, and Tartarus, the place of torment; the former on the right hand, the latter on the left; the one the receptacle of the good, the other of the evil.

The *Jewish* tradition, as delivered to us by Josephus (De Macc. c. 13), is much to the same effect. The Rabbinic schools gave "descriptions, definite and detailed, a complete topography of the unseen world." According to them, Sheol, the world of the dead, was divided into two parts—Paradise, the home of the blessed; and Gehenna, the dwelling-place of the lost; each within sight of the other. The highest place of honour in Paradise was Abraham's bosom, who still here exercised the virtue of hospitality, for which he was famous on earth.¹ Some said that there were "two Paradises—the upper and the lower: one in heaven, for those who had attained the heights of holiness; one on earth, for those who had lived but decently; and the heavenly Paradise was sixty times as large as the whole lower earth. Each had seven palaces, and in each palace were its appropriate dwellers. As the righteous dead entered Paradise, angels stripped them of their grave-clothes, arrayed them in new robes of glory, and placed on their heads diadems of gold and pearls. There was no night there. Its pavement was of precious stones. Plants of healing power and wondrous fragrance grew on the banks of its streams. From this lower Paradise the souls of the dead rose on sabbaths and on feast-days to the higher, where, every day, there

¹ "Bonis suæ virtutes manant: sic Abrahamo sua hospitalitas" (Grotius).

was the presence of Jehovah holding council with His saints.”¹

The popular belief on this subject *at the time of our Lord's ministry* was as follows :—That the soul after death, gifted with its former powers of retrospective and prospective thoughts, and possessed of the habits and affections cultivated and acquired on earth, entered immediately on a new state of being, in a place which is neither heaven nor hell, but contains, in its two divisions, many of the constituents of each of those states ; that the righteous dead are translated, as soon as the spirit leaves the body, to a place of rest and blessedness, which is called sometimes Abraham's bosom, sometimes Paradise, and that the evil are conveyed to another department of the same place, called Gehenna, or Tartarus ; and that here they await, in hope or fear, the full and final consummation, which is to take place at the general judgment. This doctrine seems to have received the “imprimatur” of our Lord's sanction ; for He uses both the phrases—“Paradise,” as here, and “Abraham's bosom,” as in S. Luke xvi. 22 ; also “Gehenna,” in S. Mark ix. 43, 45 ; and S. Peter uses the word *ταπρώρας* in his second Epistle, ii. 4, which in our version is translated “cast them down to hell.” Of which sanction Bishop Bull says, “If this had been an erroneous opinion of the Jews, doubtless our Saviour would not have given any the least countenance to it, much less have plainly confirmed it by teaching the same thing in the parable of Dives and Lazarus.”²

Irenæus gives us the view taken *by the early church.*

¹ Smith's Dictionary of the Bible, ii. p. 705.

² Vol. i. p. 61.

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"The souls," he says, "go away to the place ordained for them by God, and there walk till the Resurrection, awaiting their resurrection; then, having received their bodies, and having risen wholly, that is, with their bodies, as the Lord rose, so shall they come to the vision of God."¹

We therefore conclude that this Paradise, into which our Lord was about to descend, and into which He promised to receive and welcome the penitent thief, was not either the earthly Paradise from which the first Adam was banished, nor yet the heavenly Paradise of perfect happiness, which is to be the everlasting dwelling-place of the saved, but the Paradise of the intermediate world;² and in entering this, our Lord gave yet another testimony to the perfection of His humanity, the depth of His self-humiliation, the comprehensiveness of His love. And thus His descent into hell in His Spirit, as well as into the sepulchre in His Body, has made the grave and the spirit-world far different from what they were before; and now both the bodies and souls of those who die in Jesus are "prisoners of hope" (Zech. ix. 12).

¹ αἱ ψυχὰς ἀπέρχονται εἰς τὸν τόπον τὸν ὁρισμένον αὐταῖς ἀπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ, κακεῖ μέχρι τῆς ἀναστάσεως φοιτῶσι, παραμένονσαι τὴν ἀνάστασιν· ἔπειτα ἀπολαβοῦσαι τὰ σώματα, καὶ ὁλοκλήρως ἀναστᾶσαι, τούτεστι σωματικῶς, καθὼς καὶ ὁ Κύριος ἀνέστη, οὕτως ἐλεύσονται εἰς τὴν ὕψιν τοῦ Θεοῦ (Irenæus, v. 31).

Cf. S. Ambrose (De Bono Mortis, c. x.), "Ergo dum expectatur plenitudo temporis, expectant animæ resurrectionem debitam. Alias manet pœna, alias gloria: et tamen nec illæ interim sine injuriâ, nec istæ sine fructu sunt."

² "Non intellige de terreno Paradiso vel horto voluptatis, unde Adam est expulsus; nec de Paradiso angelico vel cœlo empyræo, quia ad illud ante Christum nemo ascendit; sed de Limbo sanctorum, et sinu Abrahæ, ad quem anima Christi et latronis descendit" (Ludolphus).

Seven Last Words of Christ Crucified. 63

“Lord, when with dying lips my prayer is said,
Grant that in faith Thy kingdom I may see ;
And, thinking on Thy Cross and bleeding Head,
May breathe my parting words, ‘ Remember me.’

“Remember me, but not my shame or sin ;
Thy cleansing Blood hath washed them all away ;
Thy precious Death for me did pardon win ;
Thy Blood redeemed me in that awful day.

“Remember me ; yet how canst Thou forget
What pain and anguish I have caused to Thee
The Cross, the Agony, and Bloody Sweat,
And all the sorrow Thou didst bear for me ?

“Remember me ; and, ere I pass away,
Speak Thou the assuring Word that sets us free,
And make Thy promise to my heart, ‘ To-day
Thou too shalt rest in Paradise with Me.’ ”

(Hymns Ancient and Modern.)

III.

Γίνου, ἰδοὺ ὁ υἱὸς σου. Ἴδοὺ ἡ μήτηρ σου.

Mulier, ecce filius tuus. Ecce mater tua.

Woman, behold thy Son. Behold thy mother.

S. JOHN xix. 26.

DEEP and bitter must have been the Virgin Mother's anguish, as she "stood by the cross of Jesus." Now were fulfilled the words spoken so long ago by Simeon in the temple, "A sword shall pierce through thine own soul also" (S. Luke ii. 35). But this sad trial had not come upon her without previous preparation. Simeon's words must have echoed all these years "in her heart" where she "kept" (διετήρει, ver. 51) so many things concerning her Son which, at the time they were done or spoken, she only imperfectly understood. God had trained her beforehand, as He ever does train those whom He calls to "suffer great things for His sake." About twenty years before this, when her Son was twelve years old, and He had gone with His parents to Jerusalem to the Feast of the Passover (at this same time, therefore, of the year), "as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem, and Joseph and His mother knew not of it." For three days they lost Him; but after they had "sought Him, sorrowing, they

found Him in the temple." And when His mother expostulated with Him for the anxiety which He had occasioned them, He answered them, "How is it that ye sought Me? Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" And the Evangelist adds, "they understood not the saying which He spake unto them; but *His mother kept all these sayings in her heart*" (vv. 41-51). And now as she stands, in speechless agony, beside His cross, doubtless these sayings spoken so long ago, and her bitter experiences during those three sad days of bereavement, would rise up in her heart, where she had so carefully "pondered" them, and would now be "understood." That experience was a foretaste of this. Oh! would the sequel be the same? "After three days" should she find Him again now as she did then? Amidst all her darkness there would, possibly, be this gleam of hope. What though He was now dying beside her? What though it seemed an impossibility that He should ever be restored to her? Even before His conception she had confessed to the angel Gabriel her faith in what he said, that "with God all things are possible" (i. 37, 38). And surely, in the three-and-thirty years which had elapsed since then, that faith had only strengthened and increased.

And though we are not told expressly that our Lord communicated to His mother beforehand any revelation of His approaching sufferings, death, and resurrection, we can have little doubt that He did thus prepare her. Time after time we find Him insisting upon these truths to His apostles, that "when the time came, they might remember that He told them of them" (S. John xvi. 4); and He did

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not love His mother less than them, He would not act less kindly and considerately and tenderly towards her than He did towards the twelve. Though little is mentioned concerning her during the three years of His ministry, we cannot think that she kept away from Him. It is expressly stated that she was with Him at the beginning of His ministry (S. John ii. 12). And surely we cannot think that His blessed mother was no nearer to Him than the multitudes that followed Him. Surely He who knew the inmost hearts of all around Him, and sympathized in every sorrow, and had a kind word for every stricken soul and a tender love for every bleeding heart, was not regardless of, or indifferent to, the love which His mother bore towards Him, or the keen thrusts of that sword which was so sorely to pierce her soul. He who, hundreds of years before, had spoken on Mount Sinai those "ten words" (Ex. xxxiv. 28) and had made one of them, "Honour thy mother," and who, during His ministry, had censured the scribes for their non-observance of this law (S. Matt. xv. 3-6), He must have entirely fulfilled this law Himself, as it never yet had been fulfilled, offering to her, His mother, the most devoted love, the highest honour, the tenderest regard that a mother had ever received from her son. And now, when—

"At the cross her station keeping
Stood the mournful mother weeping,
Where He hung, the dying Lord,"

could He be insensible to the "deep woe of her affliction"? He who at the gates of Nain, when He met the funeral procession, and when He saw it had compassion, because the

dead man was "*the only son of his mother, and she was a widow,*" and "said unto her, Weep not" (S. Luke vii. 12, 13); He, who wept at the grave of Lazarus (S. John xi. 35), in His deep sense of the miseries which death had inflicted, and in as deep sympathy with every mourner who in all the after ages should stand with brimming eyes and breaking hearts beside the bed of the dying and the sepulchre of the dead;—could He withhold His compassion now? If His servant S. Paul could say to his sorrowing friends, "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart?" (Acts xxi. 13), could our Lord be less sensible to the anguish of His blessed mother?

And yet, though our Lord had spoken twice since He was nailed to the cross, He had not spoken to her from whom He had received that life which was now so quickly ebbing away. We can imagine how eagerly she would drink in His words as He spake, first of all to His Father in intercession for his murderers, and then to the penitent thief to assure him of admission into Paradise. Did He see her standing there beside His cross? Would He speak one last word of love to comfort her breaking heart? Yes; the third time He speaks, and His words are addressed especially to herself: "Woman, behold thy son!" and then adds, to the beloved disciple, "Behold thy mother!" "Short sentences! He was too exhausted to say more; but in that hour of death-torture, He could think of her desolate state when He was gone, and with delicate, thoughtful attention provide for her well-being!"¹

¹ F. C. Robertson.

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What a picture of faithful, silent devotion and endurance is given us in those words, "Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother!" (S. John xix. 25.) When the wife of Phinehas heard that the ark of God was in the hands of the enemy she died with dismay (1 Sam. iv. 19, 20). But the Virgin Mother "stood" beside the cross on which her Son and Lord was dying in agony and shame, and neither swooned nor spake, but only looked and listened. "What then shall I liken to thee, O daughter of Jerusalem? what shall I equal to thee, that I may comfort thee, O virgin daughter of Zion? for thy breach is great like the sea; who can heal thee?" (Lam. ii. 13).

One of the thoughts which press most upon the soul of a dying man is, What will become of those whom I must leave behind? S. Peter was very anxious to know what would become of his loved companion S. John: "Lord, and what shall this man do?" (S. John xxi. 21). David, when he was in distress at Mizpeh of Moab, made careful provision for the safety and comfort of his father and mother (1 Sam. xxii. 3, 4). And He who has bidden us, "Honour thy father and thy mother," gives us here an example and pattern of filial love and honour.¹

But what can He now do for His mother? During His ministry "He had not where to lay His head" (S. Luke ix. 58). And as He had no home of His own, so He had no

¹ "Quod prius mandavit, docens, Honora patrem et matrem, hoc nunc suo exemplo docuit et fecit, quod faciendum admonuit" (Ludolphus).

αὐτὸς δὲ σταυρούμενος παρατίθεται τὴν μητέρα αὐτοῦ τῷ μαθητῇ, παιδεύων ἡμᾶς μέχρις ἐσχάτης ἀναπνοῆς πᾶσαν ποιῆσθαι ἐπιμέλειαν τῶν γεγεννηκότων (S. Chrys. in Joan. Hom. lxxiv.).

money to leave behind Him : for the supply of His daily needs and those of His disciples He had long been dependent on others, who might be disposed to shelter or support them, or contribute to the "bag" in which they carried their slender store. Nay, His very raiment had been taken off from Him and taken as a perquisite by His executioners. But even this last word was a wealth of happiness and comfort to her through all her remaining life on earth ; and by His last disposition He bequeathed to her a holy and happy home where she might rest after He was gone. "He saith unto His mother—

"*Woman!*" Once before He had thus called her, when at the marriage feast of Cana He said, "Woman, what have I to do with thee ! Mine hour is not yet come" (S. John ii. 4). He was then about to exercise the power of His Godhead which He had not derived from her, and therefore allowed of no interference even from her whom He loved so well ; but He intimated that the "hour" would come when He would publicly acknowledge her as His mother, even the hour of the utmost weakness of that nature which from her He had derived.¹

¹ "Ista hora nondum venerat, quando aquam in vinum conversurus eidem Matri dixerat, 'Quid mihi et tibi est, Mulier? Nondum venit hora mea.' Non enim de Mariâ sumpserat quod habebat in divinitate, sicut de Mariâ sumpserat quod pendebat in cruce" (S. Aug. Serm. clixviii.).

"Hanc itaque horam prædixerat quæ tunc nondum venerat, in quâ deberet agnoscere moriturus de quâ fuerat mortalis natus. Tunc ergo divina facturus, non divinitatis sed infirmitatis matrem velut incognitam repellebat. Nunc autem humana jam patiens, ex quâ fuerat factus homo affectu commedabat humano. Tunc enim Qui Mariam creaverat innotescebat virtute : nunc vero Quod Maria pepererat pendebat in cruce" (S. Aug. in Joan. Evang. tract. cxix.).

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1. "Woman." He calls her thus, probably, rather than Mother, because He would not more deeply wound her already pierced heart.¹ He knew how the heart of Abraham was touched of old, when he was about to offer up his son in obedience to His command, when Isaac said, "*My father, behold the fire and the wood*" (Gen. xxii. 7). And, moreover,—

2. We may well believe that as He was so perfectly human, and all His human affections were so quick and sensitive, He refrained from calling her "Mother," that He might not excite in Himself a storm of human emotions, in His heart which was already breaking; for as His passion, so also His compassion was infinite and unspeakable.² So S. Bernard says, that great as were our Lord's bodily sufferings, much greater were those of His heart, from the deep compassion He had for His blessed mother, who stood heart-pierced beside His cross.³

3. He calls her "Woman" rather than "Mother," to protect her from the rudeness of the rabble collected

¹ "Non dixit ei, Mater, sed 'Mulier;' ne Matris dolorem amplius excitaret" (Ludolphus).

² S. Augustine has a beautiful passage to this effect: "Non est mirum si doles et condoles, si pateris et compateris, bone Fili, in desolatione Matris, in separatione Matris, in commendatione Matris, nunquam enim te deseruit; non in infantiâ, non in adolescentiâ, non in juventute, non in passione tuâ. Nunquam defuit tibi ejus solatium, sed nec ejus obsequium. Lactat infantem, audit et sequitur prædicantem, videt et comitatur patientem: contemplatur opprobria, intuetur vulnera, audit tua verba. Tu vero, bone Jesu, quanquam esset dolor intolerabilis, plaga insanabilis, in agoniâ mortis, et ultimo spiritu constitutus, non oblivisceris Matrem tuam!"

³ "O bone Jesu, magna pateris exterius in corpore; sed multo magora interius in corde, ex compassione Matris omnia Tecum participantis."

beneath His cross. Those who so cruelly mocked His own sufferings were little likely to respect hers; and had they known who she was, she might have been exposed to insult and reproach, or have been driven away from her station by the cross, and so have lost the consolation of being with Him, which was her support now, and would be her solace to the end.

4. The word "woman," addressed by a son to his mother, would in our language be a term of reproach, or, at least, of disrespect; but it was not so in other countries in old times. In Greek tragedians we often find queens and other women of high degree thus addressed, as a title of honour and regard. And if it was so in the seats of pagan civilization, how much more is it, or ought it to be, in all the kingdoms of Christendom, since one of the effects of the propagation of Christianity has been to restore woman to the high and holy position to which she was created, but of which she had been deprived in the dark ages which preceded the advent of Christ. And in calling His Mother "Woman," surely our Lord signified that she was the most perfect flower of womanhood that the world had ever seen; that she was indeed "highly favoured of the Lord, and blessed among women" (S. Luke i. 28): and that as Eve, the first woman, had brought sin into the world, and had brought forth children unto death,¹ so Mary was indeed the true Eve, "the mother of all living," inasmuch as she was the mother of Him in whom is life (S. John i. 4), and in whom "all are made alive" (1 Cor. xv. 22).

¹ "Hausit virus peritura, et perituros paritura!" (S. Bernard).

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And if, as we doubt not, the old Serpent who had tempted and triumphed over Eve in the garden was now intently witnessing all that our Lord said and did, surely, as in His last word to the penitent thief He had made mention of "Paradise," and began this next saying with the word "Woman," the tempter would feel to his discomfiture, as we do to our eternal joy, that He who speaks is none other than He of whom it was said to the tempter, "The seed of the *woman* shall bruise thy head" (Gen. iii. 15).

5. The use of the word "Woman" instead of "Mother" may also have been an intimation that—as the apostle says of the disciples of his day, "Though we have known Christ after the flesh, henceforth know we Him no more" (2 Cor. v. 16)—there would henceforth be, in some sense, a change in her relationship towards Him. Never, indeed, could she lose the high honour with which she had been favoured in being chosen to be the mother of the Messiah; never could He forget the tender and holy memories of Bethlehem and Nazareth; but henceforth her communion with Him must be spiritual, and her devotion to Him as her Lord excel her affection to Him as her Son.

"*Behold thy son.*" How sad an exchange it must have seemed, even though it was her Son's last gift,—John for Jesus, the servant for the Lord, the disciple for the Master, man for God, the son of Zebedee for the Son of God.¹ But it was a most gracious and merciful provision, a special

¹ "Tradit Dominus Matri Johannem pro Jesu, servum pro Domino, discipulum pro Magistro, hominem pro vero Deo, filium Zebedæi pro Filio Dei, nepotem pro Filio suo, Qui erat totum suum gaudium, ac vita sua et solatium; quæ mutatio ipsam intus cruciat" (Ludolphus).

reward for her faithfulness and love ; for had she not stood beside His cross now, she had lost this legacy of His love. In singling out S. John as the stay of her remaining years on earth, our Lord knew that He would be the latest survivor of all the apostles, and therefore would be spared to her till her death. "Behold thy mother !" How great a proof of the affection and confidence which our Lord reposed in His beloved disciple ! and how precious a legacy is here bequeathed to him !¹ Now surely was fulfilled that promise, "Every one that hath forsaken father or mother for My sake shall receive a hundredfold" (S. Matt. xix. 29).

We may conclude that S. John was able to provide for the blessed Virgin Mother. Though during our Lord's ministry he had left all to follow Him, his father Zebedee was not a poor man. He had a boat of his own, and "hired servants," (S. Mark i. 20), and a house at Bethsaida, and possibly at Jerusalem ; whereas the Blessed Virgin had probably now no settled home. This disposition of our Lord clearly shows that Joseph was now dead, and that she had no other son but Jesus ; the "brethren" of our Lord, spoken of by the evangelists, being clearly not her own sons.

To his loving reverent care, S. John at once² took the Virgin Mother. It is thought that he immediately removed her from the scene of the crucifixion. If so, he must himself certainly have returned, as he says, very emphatically, that he was an eye-witness of the "blood and water" that

¹ "Felix depositum, singulare privilegium, insigne solatium" (S. Augustine).

² ἀπ' ἐκείνης τῆς ὥρας. But one MS. reads ἀπ' ἐκείνης τῆς ἡμέρας (see Grotius).

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"came out" of the Saviour's pierced side (1 John xix. 34, 35).

"And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own";¹ the word implies more than his own "home;" it signifies that he now took charge of her as his own mother, and treasured her in his heart as his own special care.² Nicephorus records³ that the Blessed Virgin lived with S. John at Jerusalem eleven years; others, that she lived even to remove with him to Ephesus. But it is probable, as tradition tells us, that he never left the boundaries of Palestine so long as she lived.

How holy and peaceful must have been this home; and how reverently and faithfully must the beloved disciple have fulfilled his sacred charge! How unceasing must have been the communings of the "Mother" and the "son" concerning Him whom they both so dearly loved! How must angels have loved to hover over that holiest home on earth! And how often must those words of the prophet have been fulfilled, "Then, they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened and heard it" (Mal. iii. 16)!

And yet it is very observable that S. John, notwithstanding the opportunities which he had, above all the other evangelists and apostles, of knowing all the incidents of our Lord's retired life at Nazareth, and of His affectionate regard for

¹ ἔλαβεν αὐτὴν εἰς τὰ ἴδια.

² "Namque erit ista mihi genetrix" (Æn. ix.).

³ "Suscepit eam in sua, non prædia, quæ nulla proprie possidebat, sed officia, quæ propriâ dispensatione exsequenda curabat (S. Aug. in Joan. Evang. tract. cxix.).

⁴ Eccl. Hist. lib. ii. cap. 3.

His blessed mother, and though he was her constant companion from this time to her death, yet, in his Gospel, his Epistles, and the Book of the Revelation, he maintains a profound silence concerning her ; except that he narrates the story of her presence at Cana in Galilee, when our Lord said to her, " Mine hour is not yet come," and this His recognition of her, and provision for her when His hour *was* come.

Surely the Holy Spirit, foreseeing the frailty of future generations, designedly drew the curtain to conceal her from our curious gaze, lest we should be tempted to dwell too absorbingly upon her graces and virtues, and thus to detract from her due honour, by honouring her above her due. At the same time we cannot deny that too many, in their desire to avoid the error of superstition, have rushed into the other of irreverence ; and comparatively few treat with sufficient honour, reverence, and love her of whose substance " the Word was made Flesh." " Far be it," says Bishop Pearson,¹ " from any Christian to derogate from that special privilege granted her, which is incommunicable to any other. We cannot bear too reverend a regard unto the mother of our Lord, so long as we give her not that worship which is due unto the Lord Himself. Let us keep the language of the primitive Church : ' Let her be honoured and esteemed ; let him be worshipped and adored.' "² So Bishop Hall protests against the cold indifference which is so often shown towards her : " How worthily is she honoured of men, whom

¹ " Exposition of the Creed " (Art. iii.).

² ἐν τιμῇ ἔστω Μαρία, ὃ δὲ Πατήρ, καὶ Υἱὸς καὶ Ἅγιον Πνεῦμα προσκυνέσθω· τὴν Μαρίαν μηδεὶς προσκυνέτω" (S. Epiph. Hæres. lxxix).

the angel proclaimed beloved of God ! O blessed Mary, he cannot bless thee, he cannot honour thee too much, that deifies thee not. That which the angel said of thee thou hast prophesied of thyself : we believe the angel and thee. All generations shall call thee blessed, by the Fruit of whose womb all generations are blessed." Surely, when, to the disciple whom He loved, our Lord said, "Behold thy mother," He bequeathed her to the love and reverent regard of all His beloved disciples in the future, as when He said to her, "Behold thy son," He was "not ashamed to call us brethren" (Heb. ii. 2) and commend us to her love.

We may not fail to notice how entirely the Blessed Virgin acquiesces in and accepts her Son's disposal of her future. Gladly as she would have changed places with the penitent thief, and have been that day with her Son in Paradise, she does not question His love or His wisdom, but displays the same simple faith and obedience that she had shown at the time of the Annunciation : "Behold the handmaid of the Lord ; be it unto me according to Thy word" (S. Luke i. 38). Hers, truly, was that "meek and quiet spirit which is in the sight of God of great price" (1 S. Pet. iii. 4).

And thus does God deal ever, ordering diversely for the penitent and the saint. He knows that both need comfort, but in different ways and of different kinds. The penitent thief is sustained amid all the terrible sufferings of the cross with the promise of immediate acceptance and happiness. The lost sheep is restored to the fold with more evident tokens of rejoicing than are displayed for the safety of the ninety and nine that went not astray (S. Luke xv. 5-7). The prodigal son is welcomed on his return with demon-

strations of affection and honour such as are not shown towards the elder son who has remained with his father at home (vv. 22-24, 29-32). The penitent needs these sensible assurances of favour and forgiveness: his fears might otherwise prevail over his hopes, and the momentary gleam of faith be quenched in the abiding gloom of despair. But the mother's place is in her Son's heart. She knew that she might trust to the very death, ay, and beyond death too, His love and devotion. And, therefore, when our Lord answers the dying thief's prayer to be "remembered," with the promise, "To-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise," He answers the deep longings of His mother's heart to be with Him, with the assurance that she is "remembered." Purity is better than penitence; and while penitence is in danger of losing sight of the Saviour through the blinding tears of its sorrow, "the pure in heart," with unclouded vision, "see God," and, in that sight, feel that they are indeed "blessed."

We learn many lessons from this saying of our Lord :—

1. The unselfishness and considerate love of our Lord. How selfish we are prone to be in times of extreme suffering and prostration! How difficult we find it to think or to speak of anything beyond our own pain and weakness! But since our Lord was crucified He had spoken only thrice, but each time it was for others, not for Himself.

2. The duty of filial care and love. The command of God to "honour our father and mother" is the first of those of the second table, and immediately follows those which relate to our duty towards God. We learn here, by a perfect example, that we must show "piety [marg. "affection"] at home (*τὸν ὄλιον οἶκον εὐσεβεῖν*), and to requite our

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parents ;" to provide for their necessities in the days of their age and infirmity, and to forestall their wants and wishes by our loving care and affectionate consideration.

3. Beyond the limits of our own family we are to direct the energies of our love towards all those who are in need of our sympathy and succour, the homeless and the sorrowful and the bereaved, and all "who are any ways afflicted or distressed in mind, body, or estate." Such as these our dying Lord left to us as His representatives, in ministering to whom we shall "do it unto Him."

4. The Cross of Christ is the true home of every sad and desolate heart. If, like the Virgin Mother, we stand beside the cross of Jesus, we, too, shall be assured of His sympathy and receive tokens of His love. There we may ever find a refuge from the evils of sin, and a refreshment for the pains of suffering : there we shall be taught the blessings of His grace, and be shown the way to the blessedness of His glory. Under the shadow of His wings we shall find preservation in prosperity, and protection in adversity ; for in either state the outstretched hands of the crucified Saviour will give us His blessing.¹

5. We learn that those who, for His sake, and in obedience to His command, leave or renounce earthly affections and vocations to follow Him shall be abundantly recompensed, even in the life that now is. S. John had left

¹ "Ibi est nobis refugium contra mala culpæ, et refrigerium contra mala poenæ : ibi erudimur circa bona gratiæ, ibi ostenditur nobis via ad bona gloriæ. Bona et desirabilis est umbra sub alis Jesu, ubi tutum est fugientibus refugium, gratum fessis refrigerium. Una ala potest intelligi protectio in prosperitate ; alia protectio in adversitate ; una ala etiam contra mala culpæ, alia contra mala poenæ" (Ludolphus).

his father to follow Christ at the earlier part of His ministry ; and now Christ bequeaths His own mother to His beloved disciple's care. If, from love to Him, we give up the attractions of natural ties and the advantages of worldly prospects, He will take care to endow us with spiritual relationships and a rich share in His promises.

6. We learn where, in our dying hour, we may look for help for those whom we leave behind. Well does our risen and ascended Lord remember the feelings which actuated Him in His death to make provision for His mother in her desolation ; and truly, therefore, does He sympathize with all those who from dying beds cry for His help on behalf of those whom they must leave behind.

“ Must I my own beloved ones see
Weep round my dying bed for me ?
This word shall sweetest comfort bring ;
To Him whose latest mandate kind
Cared for the friends He left behind
Shall those I leave for succour cling.”¹

7. We learn how to make our homes beloved of Christ. Now that the Virgin Mother and S. John have passed away—the Mother to be for ever with her Son, and the disciple with his Lord,—is there no home on earth where His mother and His brother dwell, on which His eyes may still rest with loving tenderness, and over which His angels may still hover on ministries of grace ? Surely, yes ; wherever purity, love, obedience, patient endurance, undaunted faith are to be found on earth, there is, in some measure at least, a reproduction of that blessed home. For “who

¹ *Lyra Messianica*, p. 180.

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is my mother ? ” our Lord asks, “ and who are my brethren ?
And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples, and
said, Behold My mother and My brethren ! For whoso-
ever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the
same is My brother, and sister, and mother ” (S. Matt.
xii. 48-50).

“ At the cross her station keeping
Stood the mournful mother weeping,
Where He hung, the dying Lord ;
For her soul of joy bereavèd,
Bowed with anguish, deeply grievèd,
Felt the sharp and piercing sword.

“ Oh ! how sad and sore distressèd
Now was she, that mother blessèd
Of the sole-begotten One ;
Deep the woe of her affliction,
When she saw the crucifixion
Of her ever-glorious Son.

“ Jesu, may her deep devotion
Stir in me the same emotion,
Fount of love, Redeemer kind ;
That my heart, fresh ardour gaining,
And a purer love attaining,
May with Thee acceptance find.”

(Hymns Ancient and Modern.)

IV.

Ἠλὶ, Ἠλὶ, λαμὰ σαβαχθανὶ; τοῦτ' ἔστι Θεέ μου, Θεέ μου, ἰνατί με ἐγκατέλιπες;—S. MATT. xxvii. 46.

Ἐλωὶ, Ἐλωὶ, λαμμά σαβαχθανὶ; ὃ ἔστι μεθερμηνεύμενον Ὁ Θεός μου, ὁ Θεός μου, εἰς τί με ἐγκατέλιπες;—S. MARK xv. 34.

Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? hoc est, Deus Meus, Deus Meus, utquid dereliquisti Me?—S. MATT. xxvii. 46.

Eloi, Eloi, lamma sabachthani? quod est, interpretatum, Deus Meus, Deus Meus, utquid dereliquisti Me?—S. MARK xv. 34.

Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?—S. MATT. xxvii. 46.

Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?—S. MARK xv. 34.

BETWEEN the third and the fourth words of Christ on the cross, there was a long silence; but though He spake not, yet we are sure that—

All three hours His silence cried
For mercy on the souls of men.¹

We are told by all of the synoptic evangelists that from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour; and SS. Matthew and Mark add that about the ninth hour Jesus spake this saying. Amidst the darkness and stillness much was going on in the soul of our Lord

¹ F. W. Faber.

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Himself, and also in those of the malefactors who were crucified with Him, and the spectators beneath His cross. The darkness itself was eloquent.

1. It was eminently miraculous. It could not have been caused by any ordinary eclipse; for the moon was now at the full, and an eclipse of the sun can only take place at the new moon, when the moon is between the earth and the sun. Again, a total eclipse could not last for three hours; nor, as the moon is smaller than the sun, could it, by its interposition, so obscure the sun as to deprive the whole earth of its light; nor could it be perceived at the same moment in every part of the world. Neither could it be caused by dense and dark clouds overspreading the heavens: for thus the stars would also have been overshadowed; whereas it is reported, on the authority of Phegon, the astronomer under the Emperor Trajan, that there was in the fourth year of the 202nd Olympiad (which is taken as the date of the death of our Lord), such a total eclipse of the sun at noonday, *that the stars were plainly visible*. It does not necessarily follow that the words *ἐφ' ὅλην τὴν γῆν* should signify a universal darkness. Our translators have rendered the expression variously—in one place “over the whole land” (S. Mark xv. 33; as also “over all the land,” *ἐπὶ πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν*, S. Matt. xxvii. 45), and in another “over the whole earth,” marg. “land” (S. Luke xxiii. 44). The expression might mean only, “over all Judea;” but we are told that Tiberius witnessed it at Rome, and Dionysius the Areopagite writes that they perceived it in Egypt, and asserts that the moon at mid-day was seen by himself and his friend Apollophanes to ap-

proach the sun by a rapid and unusual motion, and that the moon placed itself before the sun, and remained in that position till the ninth hour, and then in the same manner returned to its own place in the east: and so surprised was Dionysius at the awful phenomenon, that he said to his friend, "Either the Deity is suffering, or is sympathising with one who is suffering!"¹

2. This supernatural darkness seems to have been foretold by the prophets, and therefore, in its silence, proclaimed the truth of God and the fulfilment of His purposes. S. Cyril of Jerusalem sees in it the accomplishment of Zechariah's prophecy (xiv. 6), "It shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark: but it shall be one day that shall be known unto the Lord, not day, nor night; and it shall come to pass that at evening time it shall be light;" and also of that of Amos (viii. 9), "It shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day." S. Jerome cites the prophet Jeremiah (xv. 9), as foretelling this event, "Her sun is gone down while it is yet day:" while others have traced in the connection between this "darkness" and our Lord's crying with a loud voice, the fulfilment of Joel's prophecy (iii. 15, 16), "The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem."

3. There was, doubtless, a deep meaning in this darkness. Our Lord had said, "This is your hour, and the

¹ ἢ τὸ θεῖον πάσχει, ἢ τῷ πάσχοντι συμπάσχει (Suidas).

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power of darkness" (S. Luke xxiii. 53), and we cannot doubt that "the rulers of the darkness of this world" (Eph. vi. 12) were busy during these three hours of darkness, plying the Saviour's soul with hideous and ceaseless temptations. Ludolphus mentions a tradition that the devil stood on an arm of the cross, watching if he could detect in Christ any stain of sin;¹ and S. Gregory exhorts that we should take care, and with many tears should daily think, that if even to God dying in the flesh the devil came to seek if in Him there was anything that he could claim as his, how fierce and how terrible will be his onset on us when we depart from this world, and his scrutiny of our souls, that he may accuse us before God.² But our Lord willed that this darkness should add its gloom to the terrors of His crucifixion, that He might fight "the powers of darkness" on their own ground, and thus make His victory more illustrious and glorious. Again, He was about to call us out of darkness into His marvellous light" (1 S. Pet. ii. 9), and to deliver us from that "outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth" (S. Matt. xxv. 30). And so, though God "maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (v. 45), yet, as He was our Surety, and was now "bearing our iniquities" (Isa. liii. 11), and "was made sin" (2 Cor. v. 21), and "a

¹ "Tamen in Tobia super exenteratione piscis legitur dæmonem stetit super brachium crucis, et considerasse an Christus aliquam maculam peccati haberet."

² "Curandum nobis est, et cum magnis quotidie fletibus cogitandum, quam sævus, quam terribilis sua in nobis opera requirens, in die nostri exitus princeps hujus mundi veniat, si etiam ad Deum in carne morientem venit, et in illo aliquid quæsit, in quo invenire nihil potuit."

curse for us" (Gal. iii. 13), as the earth denied Him a drop of water, so the heavens refused Him a ray of light : He "walked in darkness, and had no light." (Isa. l. 10). Again, this darkness represented, as S. Leo tells us (Serm. x. on the Passion of our Lord), the blindness of the Jews, and how, though "the Light shone in darkness, the darkness comprehended It not" (S. John i. 5); or, as S. Jerome teaches, the enormity of their sin which made "the heavens" thus "astonished and horribly afraid, and very desolate" (Jer. ii. 12). And the same Father says, "It seems to me that the light of the world drew back his rays, that neither it might see its Lord's shame, nor His blasphemers enjoy its light." And it seems eminently fitting that as a miraculous light heralded His birth, so a miraculous darkness should foreshadow His death. Many mysteries were doubtless hidden beneath this darkness.

"Thou God that hidest, who can tell,
Unless Thou teach us, how to spell
And learn aright the miracle ?

"It hushes all things ; not a sound,
Or far or near, is heard around :
The guard seem rooted to the ground.

"No word the Divine Sufferer saith ;
Only is heard His heaving breath
Fighting the duel fierce with Death.

"And breaking o'er His quivering lips,
Only the blood, that, as it drips,
Throbs through the palpable eclipse !

"Oh ! vanquish'd Light, return once more ;
Oh ! breaking Heart, that we adore,
When shall this travail-pang be o'er ?

“ When shall the day its fetters burst,
And Jesus, from the tree accurst,
Speak once, and own Himself athirst ?

“ Last act of His humility
Better to witness than to see
This still and voiceless agony.”¹

At last the silence is broken : “ about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?* that is to say, My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me ? ” Both the evangelists who record this saying, tell us that, in uttering it, “ Jesus cried with a loud voice.” And in the Psalm from which the words are quoted, the Psalmist adds, “ Why art Thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my *roaring* ” (Psalm xxii. 1. B. V.) And that He should thus “ offer up prayers and supplications with strong crying—*μετὰ κραυγῆς* ” (Heb. v. 7) the prophet Joel foretold, in the passage already quoted, “ The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem ” (iii. 15, 16). This “ loud voice ” bespeaks the extremity of His pain and anguish, not only of body, but still more of soul. The bodily suffering was extreme ; the pangs of crucifixion are become proverbial from their intensity, so that the severest pain is termed “ excruciating.” And, in our Lord’s case, this was aggravated by His agony in the garden the night before ; His scourging ; His sleepless vigil, as He was led about from place to place ; and the burden of the cross which He had fainted in bearing.

But the sufferings of His body, great as they were, were

¹ “ *Lyra Mystica.* ”

but the body of His sufferings : the soul of His sufferings was in the sufferings of His soul. He felt deeply the want of sympathy and the desertion of His disciples, and this not only for the cowardice and ingratitude which it displayed towards Himself, but also for the danger it entailed on them. His sensitiveness to the revilings of His enemies is touchingly portrayed in this Psalm which He has begun to quote, "I am a worm and no man ; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see Me laugh Me to scorn : they shoot out the lip, they shake the head" (xxii. 6, 7) "they look and stare upon Me" (ver. 17). From His own bitter experience of the cruelty and severity of such taunts, and their aggravation in times of suffering and sorrow, He has, by His Spirit, ranked those who "had trial of cruel mockings—"ἐμπαυμῶν" (Heb. xi. 36) for His sake, among the noble army of martyrs.

But there were other and deeper sorrows than these at this time overflowing His soul. "The powers of darkness" were now making their last and most terrible onset upon Him. The darkness which for three hours had covered the land was only the shadow of the "darkness" upon His soul, wherein the lion was roaring after his prey" (Psa. civ. 20, 21 ; 1 S. Pet. v. 8). We know not in what form they assailed Him ; perhaps, by horrid and hideous suggestions whispered in His ear ; by temptations to despair and distrust, ever beating upon His heart the old temptation of the wilderness, "If Thou be the Son of God," which we find his children echoing beneath the cross ; by increasing upon Him, who "tasted death for every man" (Heb. ii. 9), that "the bitterness of death" might be for ever "past" for them

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(1 Sam. xv. 32), all the horrors of death, of which up to this time he "had the power" (Heb. ii. 14).

But beyond this, He felt, as none other has or could feel it, "the sting of death" which "is sin" (1 Cor. xv. 56). It was not only that He could appreciate, as we cannot, the malignity and loathsomeness and blasphemy of sin, and that so long as He was on earth He saw little else but sin, and sin, in its seven-fold intensity, concentrated itself around His cross; but the sin of all the world was now resting on Him, in all its accumulated burden. Though Himself "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners" (Heb. vii. 26), He was the surety for sinners; and, as a man of spotless integrity, if he has made himself responsible for another's honour, and the bond is enforced on him, will feel far more than others the reproach of debt and dishonour, as well as the suffering of loss and discomfort, so our Lord at this time when He was hanging on the accursed tree, felt the shame and reproach of such a death as well as the "unknown sufferings" which His suretiship entailed upon Him.

But above and beyond all this was the suffering of the eclipse of His Father's favour, and the darkness of His Father's frown. Of this we shall have occasion to speak afterwards. Suffice it, therefore, here to say that now were fulfilled the words of the prophet, "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. . . . It pleased the Lord to bruise Him" (Isa. liii. 6, 10). As our substitute He was now suffering, in our stead, the wrath of God's vengeance upon sin, and making satisfaction to the justice of God's violated law. And therefore the "sword of the Lord awoke against the Man that was His Fellow" (Zech. xiii. 7), and seeing

us in Him, and our sins in His sufferings, the Father could not but withhold the sun of His comfort, when He was visiting Him with that "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish" which is due to "every soul of man that doeth evil" (Rom. ii. 8, 9). This affliction it was which caused Him, who was as meek as a lamb under all other sufferings, to roar like a lion.¹

The loudness of His cry also betokens the strength that even still remained in His human nature. Though, as we saw in our consideration of the last saying, the shortness of the sentences bespoke the exhaustion of the sufferer, and though this exhaustion would seem to have increased, as the next two sayings after this consist, in the Greek, of only one word each, yet we must be careful to remember that our Lord did not die of exhaustion; death had no power over His sinless nature; but of His own free will He breathed out His Spirit, and, as He did so, He cried again with a loud voice; and it was the exhibition of this strength still remaining in Him, and the evidently voluntary surrender of Himself to death, that prompted the confession of the centurion and those who came with him, "Truly this Man was the Son of God" (S. Mark xv. 39).

This loud voice also teaches us, with what earnestness our Lord cried to the Father. Earnest as His prayers ever were, there were times when "He prayed more earnestly—*ἐκτενέστερον προσήχeto*" (S. Luke xxii. 44); and as He had taught His disciples to pray in the prospect and the presence of temptation (S. Matt. xxvi. 41), He practised Himself

¹ "Id quod rugitum vocat, non humanam sed leoninam vocem significat" (Bucer).

what He had prescribed for them. As the pains of death fall upon us, and the powers of Hell gather around us, and the urgency of our condition becomes more critical and the time for prayer shorter, He teaches us, by His holy example, to cry with the loud voice of an exceeding importunity to Him that is able to save us from death's dominion and power.

It is very worthy of observation that both this saying and the last of all were uttered with a loud voice, in both of which the words He utters are quoted from the Psalms ; thus, as Theophylact says, to His last breath honouring the Scriptures. It has been thought that our Lord now began the twenty-second Psalm, which opens with these words, and continued to ponder over the remaining verses, and so on through those that follow, till He came to the fourth verse of the thirty-first Psalm, in the middle of which He breaks off and breathes out His Spirit. Whether this was the case or not we cannot tell, but all the Psalms from the twenty-second to the thirty-first are very applicable to our Lord ; and, at all events, our Lord's use of these two Psalms in particular stamps them with His authority as "speaking concerning Himself" (S. Luke xxiv. 27, 44). And His example in this particular commends to us the Book of Psalms as a treasury of devotion ; and as such it has, from the beginning, been used by the Church.

"Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani ; that is to say, My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me ?"

Both the evangelists who record this saying give us these words, probably, just as they were spoken. The words "Eli, Eli," and "lama" are Hebrew ; "sabachthani" is

a Syriac word. This may have been done, partly from a feeling of reverence, partly to account for the mistake of those that stood by, who, "when they heard it, said, This man calleth for Elias." These, S. Jerome thinks, were the Roman soldiers, who did not understand the vernacular of the Jews; or, perhaps, some of the Jews who, being at a distance, could not well distinguish what was said. It would hardly, however, seem likely that Roman soldiers would interpret the words as a call for Elias;¹ and as "Jesus cried with a loud voice," and the tumult round the cross had probably been awed into silence during the three hours of darkness, His words would be well heard. It would seem more likely that the words were spoken in scorn, as the tone of the next verse seems to indicate: "Let be; let us see whether Elias will come to save Him;" or that they regarded it as an admission of weakness, and an acknowledgment that, so far from being indeed the Messiah, as He had claimed to be, He was now longing for and asking help from Elias, who was foretold to be the harbinger and forerunner of the Christ (Mal. iv. 5; S. Matt. xvii. 10). It is remarkable that these last recorded words of His enemies concerning our dying Lord are still repeated to this day by their children in every country of the world, the veil of darkness never yet having been taken off their hearts: "Let us see whether Elias will come."

It is observable, again, that in quoting the opening words

¹ "Judæi certe erant, non Romani, cum his de Elia nihil constiterit, quem isti ex vocibus Christi vel male intellectis, vel in ludibrium versis, exsculpebant" (Wolfii, Curæ Philol. et Critic. in Evang. S. Matt.).

of this twenty-second Psalm, our Lord did not cite the words, "look upon Me," which occur in our version, as in the Septuagint and Vulgate. They are omitted in the Hebrew, and are, probably, an interpolation.

"*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani.*" This saying of our Lord has ever received an awful reverence from all those who have devoutly studied it. It contains mysteries too deep to fathom, and presents some of the greatest difficulties which we meet with in the study of theology. It is recorded of Martin Luther that, coming in his course of Scripture study to this passage, he was so thunderstruck with awe and wonder, that he remained for a long time without food, and motionless as a corpse; and at length, rousing himself from the depth of his meditations, he exclaimed, "God forsaken of God! Who can understand it?"

"My God, My God." These words seem a contradiction of those which immediately follow. If those seem to breathe almost despair, these are bright with faith and hope. The Psalmist elsewhere uses this thought as an antidote against all desponding and foreboding fears. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and *my God*" (Psa. xlii. 11). And this was his answer to his enemies, when they "said daily unto him, Where is thy God?" (ver. 10), just as those beneath our Lord's cross said, "He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him: for He said, I am the Son of God" (S. Matt. xxvii. 43).

"My God, My God." This repetition of the words is variously explained. By S. Augustine and others it is

supposed to have reference to the twofold nature of Christ ; and so Ludolphus interprets it, “ ‘ My God, whose Son I am by nature as God ; My God, whose Son I am by grace of union as man : ’ and so the repetition shows the twofold nature in Him.”¹ Against this interpretation it is to be considered whether, except in His human nature, He could call God, His God. It was indeed foretold of Him, “ He shall cry unto me, Thou art My Father, My God, and the rock of My salvation ” (Psa. lxxxix. 26) ; but the last clause is sufficient to show us that it is by virtue of His incarnation that the Father is here called the God of the Son. He does, indeed, Himself say to Mary Magdalene, “ I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and to *My God* and your God ; ” but here, again, it is easy to see that He is speaking as man, for He sends this message to the eleven, whom He calls “ My brethren ” (S. John xx. 17). Bishop Andrewes thus comments on this passage : “ For Him to say, ‘ My Father,’ is proper ; we see reason for it. But for Him to say ‘ My God,’ no reason at all, altogether improper. For how can God have a God ? . . . That we might cry, ‘ Abba, Father,’ He was content to cry that strange cry, ‘ Eli, Eli, My God, My God,’ on the cross. So Christ might then say, and truly say, ‘ My God,’ no less than ‘ My Father : ’ His ‘ Father,’ as God ; His ‘ God,’ as man. As the Son of God, a God He hath not, a Father He hath ; as the Son of Man, a Father He hath not, a God He hath. A God, I say, then, He hath ; but never till then ; never till

¹ “ *Deus Meus, cujus sum Filius per naturam in quantum Deus ; Deus Meus, cujus sum Filius per unionis gratiam in quantum Homo : et sic geminatio duplicem ostendit naturam in Eo.* ”

He meddled with us. But then, He had ; and since He hath. He that was ours, not His, is now His, as well as ours." Our Lord again speaks of the Father as His God after His ascension : "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God" (Rev. iii. 12) ; but here, again, He is speaking of Himself as "the Key of David, He that openeth, and no man shutteth ; and shutteth, and no man openeth" (ver. 7), the mediatorial King and Governor of His Church, which He was as "the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. ii. 5). There is a passage in Heb. i. 9, quoted from Psa. xlv., in which the Godhead of Christ is elaborated, which might seem to favour S. Augustine's interpretation. "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever ; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity. Therefore God, even *Thy God*, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows." In the expression "God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee," the English translation somewhat mars the original. The word "even" is an interpolation, and instead of explaining, obscures the text. From the analogy of vv. 8, 10, in which we read, "Thy throne, *O God*," and "Thou, *Lord*, hast laid the foundations of the earth," it would seem right to render this passage, "Therefore, O God, Thy God hath anointed Thee."¹ If this be a right interpretation, then the Psalmist and the apostle unquestion-

¹ "Duas Personas, Ejus qui unctus est Dei et Qui unxit, intellige. Unde et Aquila *Elohim* verbum Hebraicum non nominativo, sed vocativo, interpretatur, dicens Θεός, et nos propter intelligentiam 'Dee' posuimus, quod Latina lingua non recipit ; ne quis perversè putet Deum dilecti et amantissimi et regis bis Patrem nominari" (S. Hier. Ep. 140).

ably speak of the Father as the God of the Son. But the words that follow show evidently that they are speaking of the incarnation of the Son, "Thy God hath anointed Thee above Thy fellows." Who were these, 'His fellows?' and what was this unction wherewith He was anointed? Undoubtedly it was the humanity of the Christ that was thus anointed with the Holy Spirit, and His fellows whom He transcends are those whom, by His incarnation, He has made His brethren.¹

Hence we may conclude with Bellarmine that "The Father is called the God of the Son only after the incarnation, and by reason of the incarnation," and therefore, that the interpretation of S. Augustine that this ingemination is used in relation to the two natures of Christ is untenable.

Dr. Neale, in his commentary on the twenty-second Psalm, quoting from Gerhohus gives another interpretation. "I, being a man, owing nothing to death, yet obedient to Thee who art My God, humbled Myself to death, even the death of the cross; I, twice humbled—firstly, by being born and living in the flesh; secondly, by dying in the flesh,—say twice, 'My God, My God,' that Thou, in respect of two reasons, mayest 'look upon Me.' Once, that Thou

¹ "Deus est Qui ungit, et Deus Qui secundum carnem ungitur Dei Filius. Denique quos habet unctionis suæ Christus nisi in carne consortes?" (S. Ambros. de Fide. lib. i. cap. 3).

"Quando consortes nominantur, naturam carnis intellegi: quia Deus consortes substantiæ suæ non habet. Et quia erat unctio spiritualis et nequaquam humani corporis (ut fuit in sacerdotibus Judæorum), idcirco præ consortibus, id est, cæteris sanctis, unctus esse memoratur. Cujus unctio illo expleta est tempore qua baptizatus est in Jordane, et spiritus sanctus in specie colom bæ descendit super Eum, et mansit in illo" (S. Hier. Comment. Esai. cap. lxi.).

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mayest raise Me up in the morning from simple death, that is, of the flesh alone; secondly, that Thou mayest raise up My members from the death of their souls and bodies; first destroying the death of their souls by the death of My body, then restoring the life of their bodies by My resurrection."

Perhaps, however, this is rather an application than an explanation of the words, which may simply express the urgency of the need of His suffering humanity, as we frequently find in the Hebrew Scriptures a name or title repeated as a more earnest form of invocation, as Elisha said to Elijah, and Joash to Elisha, "My father, my father" (2 Kings ii. 12; xiii. 14).

It is worthy of notice that though our Lord begins His first and last sayings with the word "Father," He does not here cry, "My Father, my Father," but, "My God, my God." He seems to cast Himself on God's pity, as a creature on His Creator. As the Father is now treating Him as our Surety, and is hiding His face from Him, and regarding Him as our representative, who were estranged from Him through sin, so our Lord seems to waive His filial claim to the Father's love, and calls Him not "Abba, Father," implying nearness and dearness; but "*My God*," a title of awe and reverence, as if He would use no other plea than that of the Psalmist, "Forsake not the work of Thine own hands" (Psa. cxxxviii. 8).

But even still He cleaves stedfastly unto God. He says, "*My God, My God*"—"Mine, though I see Thee not: Mine, though Thou seemest to cast Me off." It is the triumph of faith over feeling—"Though He slay Me, yet will I trust

in Him" (Job xiii. 15). It is the victory of perfect obedience over temptation to impatience and despair. After such a life, of spotless holiness, unswerving devotion, perfect obedience; after serving God faithfully in the retirement of Nazareth, patiently waiting all those thirty years till God called Him to begin His work; after spending the whole of His ministry in glorifying His Father's name, and fulfilling the mission for which He was sent into the world, making it His meat and drink to "do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish His work" (S. John iv. 34); after labouring incessantly for the welfare of the souls and bodies of those whose nature He had assumed;—yet here He hangs on the cross of shame, suspended between earth and heaven, as worthy of neither, and rejected by both. Yet He can cry, even in His hour of deepest humiliation and dejection, "*My God, My God.*" His enemies beneath the cross have said the truth. Under difficulties such as man had never experienced; in spite of desolation such as human spirit had never felt; with every outward token of failure, and with every inward sense of depression, it is still true, "He trusted in God" (S. Matt. xxvii. 43).

But these words are followed by others that teach us how great was the strain upon His faith and hope, how deep and intense was the inward darkness which was overshadowing His soul, corresponding to the outward darkness which had overspread the land.

"*Why?*" "This is, at any time," says Tholuck, "a fearful word, when it is the creature that uses it to the Creator." We sometimes hear it (and it never should be without a shudder, always with an inward prayer for mercy on the

speaker) in cases where faith fails, and murmuring rebellion and defiance have taken possession of the poor struggling wounded heart, that has not yet learned to submit to the dark providences of God. But it would be impious to suppose for a moment that our Lord's patience now forsook Him, or that in this word He was challenging either the justice, or the wisdom, or the goodness of God. He might say, as the Psalmist said before Him, (and in a sense and with a meaning such as His father David had never conceived), "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" but he could also add with the Psalmist, "But Thou continuest Holy, O Thou Worship of Israel" (Psa. xxii. 1-3).

This cry "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" was rather an amazing profession of conscious righteousness, as the "My God, my God" was of triumphant faith. As He casts His eye over the whole course of His earthly life, which is now almost "finished," He feels that He can say, as none other of the human race ever did or could, "Lo, these many years have I served Thee, neither transgressed I at any time Thy commandment" (S. Luke xv. 29), and therefore now, in His dying hour, He can lift up His pure spirit to God, and, as He had fearlessly challenged His enemies, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" (S. John viii. 46), so He can appeal to Him unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secret is hid, "*Why* hast Thou forsaken Me?"

But, as the evangelists tell us that "He cried with a loud voice," it was doubtless intended that the people which stood by should hear these words. Would not any of these, in his own conscience, if not in public confession, answer this question, "Why?"

This cry of our Lord should echo through the chambers of our conscience, and our hearts should answer back to the Crucified One—"The Lord hath laid on Thee the iniquities of us all' (Isa. liii. 6). We had forsaken God; our 'sins had separated between us and our God' (lix. 2); we had 'said unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways' (Job xxi. 14); we had therefore merited and incurred the doom of eternal separation from Him, 'Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels' (S. Matt. xxv. 41); and therefore, because we had thus forsaken God, and the sentence of eternal banishment was upon us, and because, in Thine inestimable love, Thou hast suffered in our stead, and borne our curse for us, this is 'why' Thou art thus forsaken." Thus should this word, "why," be answered by our sad confessions, our tears of penitence, our professions of love, our prayers that we may never again forsake Him, "Who for us men and for our salvation," endured such dereliction, and who bore it all that *we* might *never* be forsaken.¹

S. Cyril interprets this cry as a priestly air of intercession : "My God, remember why and to what end Thou hast now forsaken Me; namely, that, being appeased, Thou mayest remove Thy wrath hanging over the human race."² Accord-

¹ "S. Leo thus interprets this word. Leo (serm. xvii. de Passione) vult hæc verba, *ut quid dereliquisti Me?* esse inquirentis causam derelictionis; ut nobis daret occasionem quaerendi causam mortis Christi, et fructum ejus; scilicet, peccatum hominum offendendum, et gratiam Dei offensi: nam utrumque tam magnum est, ut soli Deo plane perspectum sit" (De Veil. Explic. Lit. Evang. sec. Matt.).

² "Cyrillus (lib. 2. ad Reginas) vult sensum esse, 'Memento, Deus,

ing to which interpretation, our Lord is pleading with the Father the merits of His sacrifice, and the mercy and truth of the covenant between the Father and Himself.

“Why?” Flavel here comments on the contrast between this latter and the former portion of the saying. “As Faith spake first, and twice as much as Sense, so it spake more confidently than Sense did. He lays a confident claim to God as His God—‘My God, My God;’ and only queries about His forsaking of Him—‘Why hast Thou forsaken Me?’ This is spoken more dubiously, the former more confidently.”

“Why?” Many a fainting soul has learned, by his own blessed experience, the “why” of this awful dereliction of His Lord and Saviour. His people, in all ages, have experienced something of this most bitter trial, and have learned to cry with the prophet, “With my soul have I desired Thee in the night” (Isa. xxvi. 9); and to know the deep meaning of those words of the evangelist, “It was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them” (S. John vi. 17). At such times they have found that out of the very darkness of their tribulation light has sprung forth; on the very waves of their troubles Christ has walked towards them. And when they have felt most alone and most forsaken, the remembrance of these dark hours of our Lord’s passion have given them faith to cry still, “My God, my God;” it has cheered them with the assurance of His most precious

ut quid seu in quem finem Me dereliqueris : nimirum, ut placatus ultionem humano generi imminentem avertas ;’ et ita sunt verba Christi tanquam Sacerdotis Patrem placantis, et fructum sacrificii exorantis pro humano genere ” (Ibid.).

sympathy; and it has made them know and believe that the very fact of our Lord experiencing this sense of dereliction is a guarantee, since He bore it for them, that they shall never be forsaken. "For a small moment have I forsaken thee: but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid My face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer" (Isa. liv. 7, 8).

"*Hast.*" Bengel observes that the dereliction was now at an end; the word ἐγκατέλιπες referring to the past, not to the present. During the time of its pressure, He was silent, and only when it was gone, did He cry with this loud voice. "I was dumb, I opened not My mouth, because Thou didst it" (Psa. xxxix. 9).

"*Thou.*" Our Lord, foretelling to His disciples the events of the night of His agony, had said, "The hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone" (S. John xvi. 32). How this desertion weighed upon His sensitive human soul, we trace in the fact that at Gethsemane He took with Him three of their number, and said, "Tarry ye here, and watch with Me;" and when He came to them a little later and found them sleeping, He said, "What, could ye not watch with Me one hour?" (S. Matt. xxvi. 38-40). And yet, when "all the disciples forsook Him and fled" (ver. 56), He bore their desertion in silence, and said not "Why have ye forsaken Me?" But now when His Father has hidden His face from Him, He cries in an agony of sorrow, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" "Consider," says Flavel, "the intimacy, dearness, yea, oneness of those great

Persons, one unto another ; the nearer the union the sweeter the communion. Now Jesus Christ was not only near and dear to God, but one with Him—‘ I and my Father are one ’ (S. John x. 30), one in nature, will, and delight. There is a moral union of souls among men by love : but this was a natural union. No child is so one with his father, no husband with the wife of his bosom, no friend with his friend, no soul with its body, as Jesus Christ and His Father were one.”

“ *Forsaken.*” How sad a word is this for any one to utter ! Hardly is there a sadder in the vocabulary of man. Can there be any lot so wretched, so forlorn, as that of which the Psalmist speaks—“ I looked on my right hand, and beheld ; but there was no man that would know me : I had no place to flee unto ; and no man cared for my soul ” (Psa. cxlii. 4) ? It is very sad for a wife to be forsaken of her husband, and thus to become worse than widowed before her time. It is very sad for a child to be forsaken of his parents, and to be left on the wide world alone. But the child, amidst all the neglect or the desolation which he suffers, may cry to “ the Father of the fatherless,” and say, “ When my father and my mother forsake me, the Lord taketh me up ” (Psa. xxvii. 10) ; for “ thus saith the Lord, as one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you ; and ye shall be comforted ” (Isa. lxvi. 13). And the deserted wife may confidently lay claim to the defence and protection of “ the God of the widow,” as it is written, “ Fear not ; for thou shalt not be ashamed : neither be confounded ; for thou shalt not be put to shame : for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widow-

hood any more. For thy Maker is thy husband, the Lord of Hosts is His Name ; for the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, as a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God " (Isa. liv. 4-6). But to be forsaken of God ! there is no remedy for that ; and so the Psalmist says, "Unto Thee will I cry, O Lord, my strength : think no scorn of me ; lest if Thou make as though Thou hearest not, I become like them that go down into the pit " (Psa. xxviii. 1). When our Lord had been in sorrow and suffering before, whether devils or men had oppressed and afflicted Him, He could still have recourse to the thought of His Father's smile, and love, and favour. What though the devil came and tempted Him in the wilderness ? At the close of the dread encounter, when "the devil left Him, behold, angels came and ministered unto Him " (S. Matt. iv. 11). So when, in anticipation of His suffering, His soul was sore troubled, "a voice from heaven " spake to Him to sustain and comfort Him (S. John xii. 28). So, during His agony, though the cup did not depart from Him, yet "there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him " (S. Luke xxii. 43). But now there is no angel ministry, no voice from heaven, no smile from His Father's countenance ; but a mysterious darkness, of which that which covers the land is but the shadow, broods over His suffering soul.

"*Sabachthani.*" Our Lord might well be thinking at this time of his great type Isaac, who had toiled up this same hill so many hundred years before, bearing the wood of the burnt offering, as He had laboured, bearing His cross. He might remember how, though Abraham had seemed so

severe and stern, and had even stretched forth his hand, and taken the knife to slay his son, yet a voice from heaven had stayed his arm, and forbidden him to do anything unto him; and how a ram caught in a thicket had been taken, and Abraham had offered it up in the stead of his son. But our Lord knew that He was Himself the Ram, as well as the true Isaac; that He was now sacrificed as "the Lamb of God," and no voice would interpose to rescue Him, nor interrupt the full completion of the sacrifice. Very beautiful is the thought of Leo à Castro, that, in using this word, "Sabachthani," our Lord alluded to the sabec, as it is said in the LXX., "Lo, a ram was caught ἐν φυτόν βάσκεν, in the plant sabec," intimating that He was that ram hanging on the tree sabec, that is, on the cross.

"*Forsaken.*" How are we to understand this word? Certainly not of His divine nature. His Godhead was no more wounded by the crucifixion nor deserted by the Father than the sun shining on the wood is cut by the woodman's axe, or the sun itself is obscured and darkened when its rays reach not the earth through the clouds which are interposed.¹ "The whole Church," writes Dr. Neale (in his Commentary, on Ps. xxii. 1), "agrees with the explanation of the Coptic church, towards the end of the Liturgy, 'I believe, I believe, I believe and confess to the last breath of my life,

¹ "Non hoc loquitur Deitas, quæ passa non fuit, quia Divinitas in Christi passione semper illæsa mansit, sicut si sole semper lucente in ligno securis lignum inciderit, sol impassibilis permaneret, multo magis Verbi Divinitas, secundum hypostasin carni unita, carne patiente permansit impassibilis et illæsa: sed loquitur hoc humanitas, quæ videbatur derelicta, et dolorem sustinuit, quia illa morti tradita et passa fuit" (Ludolphus).

that His Divinity was never separated from His Humanity, not even for an hour, or for the twinkling of an eye.'"

Was, then, our Lord "forsaken" by the Father? Some have said that there was no real dereliction, but that the Son felt only that in His human nature He was thus forsaken. But this would seem to involve a charge of unreality inconsistent alike with the character of Him who is "the Truth," and with the very real circumstances in which He spake. And therefore we conclude with Calvin that this dereliction was not feigned but felt, was no mere fancy of a sensitively morbid imagination, but was an actual fact of intensely painful experience.¹ But we must be careful to understand that it could be of His humanity alone that our Lord here speaks. There could not be, for one moment, a severance of that union with the Father which, as the second Person of the Trinity, was His from all eternity. But, in His human nature, it would seem true that He was "forsaken." The mere fact that, in delivering Him up to His enemies, "God spared not His own Son" (Rom. viii. 32), and in no way interposed to save Him from their hands, implies such a forsaking. So Lyra says, "Christ said that He was forsaken by God the Father, because He gave Him up to the hands of those who slew Him."² But more than this is implied in the word. The Father not only left Him to the cruelties of His enemies, but also, while He was in their hands, He withdrew from His suffering humanity every sensible token of His favour and love. Every kind and degree of solace,

¹ "Non ficte nec theatrice conqueritur Se a Patre derelictum."

² "Dixit Christus Se derelictum a Deo Patre, quia dimittebat Eum in manibus occidentium" (in Matt. xxvii.).

external, internal, of body, of soul, heavenly and human,¹ was withdrawn from Him. But more even than this : as our Surety He was receiving the due for our sins. The Blessed of the Father was now made "a curse for us" (Gal. iii. 13). And therefore, while the Father smiled on Him as His Son, He frowned on Him as our Surety. "The cup which His Father had given Him" might not "pass away," but He must drink it to the dregs (S. Matt. xxvi. 42). If He was to "save others" He could not "save Himself" (xxvii. 42). If, as "the Lamb of God" He was to "take away the sin of the world" (S. John i. 29), He must take that sin, in all its accumulated burden, in all its varied multiplicity, in all its aggravated intensity, upon Him. He "who knew no sin" must be "made sin for us," if we were to be made "the Righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. v. 21). And so from the Father's voice the sentence came forth, "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is My Fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts" (Zech. xiii. 6). "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him, He hath put Him to grief," for "The Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. liii. 10, 6). If we bear in mind that, by God's own special direction, when Aaron and his sons blessed the people in His name, they were commissioned to say, "The Lord bless thee and keep thee ; the Lord make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee ; the Lord light up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace," wherein the

¹ "Humana Ipsius natura, cruciatibus dirissimis exposita, destituta fuit non modo externâ liberatione, sed et omni solatio, externo, interno, corporis, animi, cælesti, humano, sive a Divinitate Ipsius, sive a ratione humanâ, sive ex visione Dei" (Pole).

blessing is described as the shining of God's face and the lifting up of His countenance upon them, we shall see that, as our Lord was now bearing the curse due to our transgressions, and was being made a curse for us, it was only reasonable that this blessing should be reversed, and the burden of the curse should prompt the cry, "Why hast Thou *forsaken* Me?" And we find, in other parts of Scripture, that this hiding of God's face is called a forsaking and forgetting of His people; as Deut. xxxi. 16-18: "This people will forsake Me: then My anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them." And Jer. xxiii. 39: "I, even I, will utterly forget you, and I will forsake you." Lam. v. 20: "Wherefore dost thou forget us for ever, and forsake us so long time?" So also Psa. xlii. 1: "How long wilt Thou forget me, O Lord, for ever? how long will Thou hide Thy face from me?" Again, we must remember that man, whom Christ was come to redeem, was liable to eternal torment, and that our Lord, as our substitute, was to bear to the uttermost the punishment due to us. Now the very essence of the wretchedness of hell consists in the separation from God: "Depart from Me, ye cursed" (S. Matt. xxv. 41). And it is well said by Flavel, "God's forsaking of Him, though but for a few moments, is equivalent to His forsaking you for ever. It is every way as much for the dear Son of God, the darling Delight of His soul, to be forsaken for a time, as if such a poor inconsiderable thing as thou art shouldst be cast off to eternity."

We conclude, therefore, there was an actual dereliction at this time, but it was in His human nature only that He

experienced it ; and that even in His humanity, inasmuch as it was indivisibly conjoined with the Godhead, neither could the Godhead be actually absent,¹ nor the Word separated from it : but, as the whole land was darkened, though the sun was not extinguished, so His whole humanity was deprived of the light, and joy, and peace, and comfort which the Godhead ever had imparted to it : that the Father, seeing us in Him, not only withdrew from Him all consolation, but smote Him with the sword of His justice, and visited upon Him the punishment due to us ; and that thus He was indeed, for the time being, forsaken of God, and, like the scape-goat, was "sent away into a land not inhabited," or, "of separation" (marg., Lev. xvi. 21, 22).

"*Me.*" A strange wonder, truly, that though it is sin that separates between man and his God (Isa. lix. 2), yet He who, of all the sons of men, was utterly and entirely sinless, free alike from the taint of original and the stain of actual sin, should, nevertheless, be, as none other ever has or shall be in this world, forsaken of God. Stranger still, that He on whom all the forsaken in all ages had leaned for support should thus be left without succour, the "God of all comfort" be comfortless, the God of the forsaken be forsaken of God. But He was our Surety, and suffered, therefore, our deserts.

"*Me.*" It is true that He was dying as a "witness to the truth" (S. John xviii. 37), that "before Pilate" He had "witnessed a good confession" (1 Tim. vi. 13), and was now sealing that confession with His blood ; but how many

¹ "Subtraxit enim protectionem, sed non solvit unionem" (Ludolphus).

martyrs to the truth have met the greatest sufferings with the greatest joy, and have testified that the torture of the rack was like the refreshment of a bed of roses, and the flames of the "furnace as a moist whistling wind" (Song of the Three Children, 27). If death was so little formidable to them, why was it a "king of terrors" to the King of martyrs? It was because, in humbling Himself to death for our sakes, He submitted to its terrors and pains, without any alleviations, with all possible aggravations; that so He might extract its sting for ever for His people, that they might know only its shadow, not its substance, that for them henceforth the act of dying might be "falling asleep," and that they might "dread the grave as little as their bed."

"Me." There are in a perfect man three distinct parts, "spirit, soul, and body" (1 Thess. v. 23). His body was forsaken, in that "God delivered Him to the ungodly and turned Him over into the hands of the wicked" (Job xvi. 11), not interposing for His deliverance; His soul was forsaken, inasmuch as terrors of anguish rolled unrestrained over His imagination; and His spirit was forsaken, in that God withdrew from Him all the supports and comforts wherewith hitherto, when His spirit was in heaviness, God had cheered and helped Him. Yet it was not a mutual desertion. The Father forsook Him, but He forsook not His Father; at the very time when He cries, "Why hast *Thou* forsaken *Me*?" He cries also, "My God, My God."

"Me." Yet it is quite possible that, in this His extremity of bodily, mental, and spiritual anguish, He was unselfishly thinking of others as well as of Himself. Utterly and

sublimely unselfish He had been throughout. When, on the Palm Sunday, He saw the beautiful city with its glorious temple from the slope of Olivet, though He foreknew, in its every detail, all that He must endure within and without her walls, "when He was come near, He beheld the city and wept over it" (S. Luke xix. 41). When, at the time of His apprehension, Judas came with his armed band, His one care was for His disciples, lest, if they were involved in His sufferings, their faith should fail, and so He should lose any of those whom God had given Him: "If ye seek Me," He said, "let these go their way: that the saying might be fulfilled, which He spake, Of them which Thou gavest Me have I lost none" (S. John xviii. 8, 9). When, on His way to crucifixion, the women bewailed and lamented Him, "Jesus, turning unto them, said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children" (S. Luke xxiii. 27, 28). When He was being nailed to the cross, and the cruel nails were piercing and lacerating His sacred hands and feet, it was still not of Himself that He thought: His prayer was, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Twice since then, and but twice, He has spoken—but once, it was to assure the penitent malefactor, and the next time, to console His mother in her bereavement. And so, when our Lord uttered this loud cry, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" we may suppose that He was still thinking of others, speaking not merely in His own Person, but in the person of the Jews who set Him at nought and crucified Him, and of us, who in our day and generation should "crucify Him afresh." So some of the fathers (as Origen and Theophylact), explain this expression

of our Lord ; the latter of whom says, "The Lord must speak thus in the person of us men. He may have said this for the Jews, as being according to the flesh Himself a Jew, as if He had said, 'Why hast Thou forsaken the people of the Hebrews, that they should crucify Thy Son?' So that by this expression we may understand either human nature or the Jewish people."

"Me." In any case, we are comprehended in this word. For if it could have been possible that the Father had essentially separated Himself from Christ, what must have become of those for whom He had suffered so much? If God had refused to accept our Surety, what was there to interpose between us and eternal perdition? The fact that He was the Beloved of the Father (S. Matt. iii. 17 ; xvii. 5), His "Elect, in whom His soul delighted" (Isa. xlii. 1), and that by virtue of His infinite merits He could make us "accepted in Him" (Eph. i. 6), was that which qualified Him to be the Saviour of the world. If He were rejected, how could we be received?

From this saying we learn many lessons ; as, that—

1. The worst of all evils is to be forsaken of God. All other troubles, of privation, pain, sorrow, death, are tolerable if God be with us ; but if God be silent, if God be separated from us, this is unmixed and unmitigated evil.

2. Sin is the forerunner of this great evil ; it is not only the cause of it, but part and parcel of it. "Know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God" (Jer. ii. 19). "If ye forsake Him, He will forsake you" (2 Chron. xv. 2).

3. In Hell, where is eternal banishment from God and

forsaking by Him, how will the guilty soul bear that which occasioned the utmost agony to Christ on the cross? The lost will cry through all eternity, "Thou hast forsaken me," but no hope nor confidence will be theirs; for they can never cry, "*My God*;" and though their own conscience will be ever accusing and reproaching them, as it asks "why" they have come to that place of torment, no voice shall ever ask it in self-justification, for "every tongue shall confess to God," acknowledging the justice of His anger, and bewailing the folly of their sin.

4. In all trials of spiritual dryness and destitution, when God hides His face, let us remember that His Son was thus forsaken, and that He can sympathize with us in our sorrow and desolation, and that His forsakenness was experienced that we might never be utterly forsaken. The promise is ours, "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid My face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer" (Isa. liv. 7, 8). And therefore, "who is among you that feareth the Lord, and obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself upon *his God*" (1. 10).

5. How unspeakable must be the love of God for us, if thus, for our sake, he subjected His own Son to such agony and humiliation! That He might spare us, "He spared not His own Son;" that He might deliver us, He "delivered Him up for us all" (Rom. viii. 32). Well may we say, with S. Bernard, "Oh, how greatly beloved of God man must

be, in comparison with whom the Son Himself was not beloved, or, at least, not regarded.”¹

6. A sense of desertion is not a cause for despair. It may be even a closer fellowship with Christ's sufferings, a more intimate participation in our Saviour's cross. In every age even His most devoted and perfect followers have sometimes felt themselves to be forsaken. It is one of the most afflictive, but is sometimes one of the most merciful, of His dispensations, inasmuch as we are thus led to desire Him more earnestly, and to yearn more longingly for the assurance of His love, and to avoid more resolutely and more utterly all that may estrange us from it.

7. In all such seasons, we must confess how often we have forsaken God, and so have deserved such an abandonment; and, at the same time, we must hold as fast by God, knowing that our Redeemer has made expiation for our many forsakings of God by being forsaken of God in our stead. Faith must triumph over feeling, and it must believe that God loves us, though He lower on us, nay, even though He seem to loathe us. If we thus maintain our faith, the darkness shall pass away from us, as it did from Him. If we pray, “Forsake me not, O God; be not Thou far from me” (Psa. xxxviii. 21), “Leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation” (xxvii. 9); “the eternal God shall be our refuge, and underneath shall be the everlasting arms” (Deut. xxxiii. 27); a voice from Heaven shall cheer our drooping spirits, “Fear not, for *I am with thee*; be not dismayed, for *I am thy God*” (Isa. xli. 10), and the promise

¹ “O quantum dilectus, præ quo Filius Ipse aut non dilectus, aut saltem neglectus” (de Temp.).

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of exceeding blessedness shall be fulfilled in our experience,
"The Lord thy God, He it is that doth go with thee; He
will not fail thee, nor forsake thee" (Deut. xxxi. 6).

"Thousands have felt Thy healing power,
Thousands from Thee their lives have taken,
And can it be that in Thine hour
Of utmost need Thou art forsaken?
Forsaken! Oh, what grief and love
That word expresses on Thy tongue,
Thou, in Thy Godhead bright above,
And thus on earth by sorrow wrung!
Infinite God and finite man,
So high Thy state, Thy state so low,
No human thought can sound or span
The boundless deeps of such a woe.
Yet, at Thy cry of sore distress,
Our hearts to some dim knowledge waken,
And, 'mid the gloom, we faintly guess
What God has felt when God-forsaken."

(*Lyra Messianica.*)

V.

Δψω.

Σίτα.

I thirst.

S. JOHN xix. 28.

THE darkness and desolation of the last three hours had passed away. The sun had again shone forth over the land, and the light of God's countenance had revisited the Saviour's soul; as it is written in the Twenty-second Psalm, the opening verse of which he had quoted in His last cry, "He hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath He hid His face from Him; but when He cried unto Him, He heard."

But though the deepest sorrow was gone, there remained an acute sense of physical weakness and suffering. One word is all that He now says. For twenty hours our Lord had been without food; and since He ate that last Passover with His disciples, how much had He undergone both in body and soul! His agony in the garden, when "His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (S. Luke xxii. 44), had drained the moisture from His body; this had been succeeded by the protracted

vigil and repeated journeys through the night and in the early morning, from the Garden to the house of Annas; thence to the house of Caiaphas, thence to that of Pilate, thence to that of Herod, thence back again to Pilate. Besides this, in the house of Caiaphas there had been the cruel scourging at the pillar, when every stripe had brought blood, then the crowning with thorns, then the burden of the cross which had so, overtaxed his already enfeebled powers that He fainted beneath the load; then the piercing of his hands and feet, the nails lacerating the flesh and muscles, and the long hours of torture since His crucifixion—all these had brought upon Him a thirst so intense that in Him were fulfilled those words of the Psalmist, "My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and Thou hast brought me into the dust of death" (Psa. xxii. 15); "I am weary of crying; my throat is dried" (Ixix. 3); both of which passages occur in Psalms which are applied in the New Testament to the crucifixion of Christ.

And this suffering of thirst was, we know, a usual element in the pains of the crucified; and there is no pain more extreme and more intolerable than this. Travellers in the eastern deserts have given graphic descriptions of the torment which it produces, and have said that when suffering from it they would have given gold for water; and if they discovered a glimmering spot in the distance that looked like water, or were approaching to a place where they had found water before, they would hasten forward with frantic eagerness that they might cool their parched throat and swollen tongue; and if they found that it was only a sandy

surface whereon the sun's rays had played and so had deceived their expectations, or the water which they had formerly found was dried up, the disappointment brought them well-nigh to a madness of despair. Thus it is written in the book of Job, "My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook, and as the stream of brooks they pass away ; which are blackish by reason of the ice, and wherein the snow is hid : what time they wax warm, they vanish ; when it is hot, they are consumed out of their place. The paths of their way are turned aside ; they go to nothing, and perish. The troops of Tema looked ; the companies of Sheba waited for them : they were confounded, because they had hoped ; they came thither and were ashamed" (vi. 15-20). This suffering of thirst made the mighty Samson despair : "He was sore athirst, and called on the Lord, and said, now shall I die for thirst?" (Jud. xv. 18). Darius, on one occasion, to relieve his thirst, drank eagerly of filthy water which was polluted by the dead bodies of the slain, and protested that he had never before tasted a draught that was so delicious.¹ And we find that the figure of thirst is used to express a state of the utmost suffering and affliction : "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Jacob will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys : I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water" (Isa. xli. 17, 18).

It is probable, as it has been supposed, that our Lord, from the excellent temperament of His body, had more

¹ "Cujusmodi voluptatis hactenus expertus fui?" (Plutarch).

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tender, and delicate, and subtle senses than others,¹ and therefore would suffer more than others when His "moisture was" thus "turned into the drought of summer" (Psa. xxxii. 4).

But this sense of thirst, so extreme and so intolerable, was voluntarily borne.

"His are the thousand sparkling rills
That from a thousand fountains burst,
And fill with music all the hills;
And yet He says, 'I thirst.'"

(Hymns Ancient and Modern).

He it was who had opened a well of water for Hagar and Ishmael when they were dying of thirst in the wilderness of Beersheba (Gen. xxi. 14-19); who had "brought forth water out of the stony rock, so that it gushed out like the rivers" (Psa. lxxviii. 17), for the Israelites at Rephidim; who had cleft a hollow place in the jaw-bone of the ass, whence water came out to revive Samson's spirit when he was sore athirst at Lehi (Jud. xv. 18-20). He who had so lately supplied wine in abundance at the marriage feast at Cana in Galilee (S. John ii. 7-11), and, later still, had fed five thousand men with five loaves, and four thousand with seven loaves (S. Matt. xvi. 9, 10), could easily have satisfied His own terrible thirst. He had but to will it, and the angels who had ministered to Him after His fast in the wilderness (iv. 11), or "twelve legions" of other angels just as ready to "minister unto Him" (xxvi. 53), would at once have supplied his wants. Or He had but to "command the

¹ "Corpus ejus fuit optime complexionatum, cum formatum fuit miraculosè" (Aquinas, pars. tertia, Art. vi.).

clouds above, and open the doors of heaven" (Psa. xxviii. 23), and the rains had fallen down in copious streams to refresh and cool his tongue. "But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" (S. Matt. xxvi. 54).

For special reference is made to the Scripture prophecy in this respect. "Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst." We must not, however, suppose that Christ did this because the Scripture had foretold it; for then it would follow that the New Testament was appointed for the Old Testament and its fulfilment, whereas the Old Testament was written to predict what should happen in the New Testament. Christ did not do it, because it was foretold; but it was foretold, because Christ should do it. We must understand it, therefore, as the schoolmen say, as spoken not causatively, but consequently.¹ It was foretold, "*When I was thirsty*, they gave me vinegar to drink" (Psa. lxix. 21), and so it came to pass.

This saying of our Lord seems of strictly personal application; and yet, surely, like the rest, "for the people that stood by He said it" (S. John xi. 42). It appears as if, in saying this, He exposed Himself to the insults of the crowd, which had not spared to mock His sufferings before. And as He said, "I thirst," how must angels have longed to

¹ "Non ponitur causative sed consecutive. Non enim ideo Christus hoc fecit, quia Scriptura hoc prædixerat, nam tunc sequeretur quod Novum Testamentum propter Vetus et ejus impletionem esset, cum tamen e converso sit; sed ideo prædictum est, quia per Christum consummandum erat" (Ludolphus).

minister to His needs! But there was one beneath His cross, in whose heart our Lord saw the workings of compassion for His suffering—an enemy indeed; but He will give to this enemy the golden opportunity of supplying His last need before He died. “Jesus saith, I thirst.” “And straightway one of them” (that stood near) “ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave Him to drink,” and this amidst the protestations of the rest, who said, “Let be: let us see whether Elias will come to save Him” (S. Matt. xxvii. 47–49). Theophylact and others think that this act was not one of compassion but of cruelty, and Pliny says it is one of the properties of vinegar to staunch the issue of blood, and so to prolong life.¹ And it cannot be denied that the Psalmist, foretelling our Lord’s thirst and this man’s offering the vinegar, seems to mention it as an aggravation rather than an alleviation of His anguish: “They gave me gall to eat, and when I was thirsty, they gave me vinegar to drink” (lxix. 21). On the other hand, we must admit that it was probably the only thing which, at the moment, was at hand, being the ordinary sour wine which was given to malefactors on the cross; and Plutarch hints that the use of wine expedites the end, and gives a shorter and speedier dismissal.² May we not hope that this “one of them” who “straightway ran” to relieve the agony of the parched Sufferer, from whose swollen tongue the one word with diffi-

¹ “Sanguinis proluvium sistunt ex aceto” (Nat. Hist.).

² ‘Αντώνιος ἤτησεν οἶνον πίνειν, εἴτε διαψών, εἴτε συντομώτερον ἐλπίζων ἀπολυθῆσθαι (Plut. Anton.).

culty fell, was given to drink of the water of everlasting life by Him who said, "If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink" (S. John vii. 37); and that he shall be foremost among those blessed ones to whom He shall say hereafter, "I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink" (S. Matt. xxv. 35).

The Fathers, with their keen insight into the mystical meaning of Scripture, have explained this giving of the sponge filled with vinegar thus: "The Jews were themselves degenerated from the wine of the patriarchs and prophets, and were filled, as it were, from the full vessel of the iniquity of the world, having a heart, like a sponge, of cavernous and tortuous recesses."¹ And so God says by His prophet, "I had planted there a noble vine, wholly a right seed: now art thou turned into a degenerate plant of a strange vine unto Me" (Jer. ii. 21). "What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" (Isa. v. 4).

But besides the natural, we cannot doubt that there was also a supernatural thirst, which prompted our Lord to cry, "I thirst." He thirsted—

1. To fulfil to the uttermost the will of His Father. He had said, when, before this, He thirsted at Jacob's well, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work" (S. John iv. 34). And it is remarkable in this connection, that His next word is, "It is finished."

¹ "Judæi quippe ipsi erant degenerantes a vino patriarcharum et prophetarum, et tanquam de pleno vase iniquitatis mundi hujus impleti, cor habentes velut spongiam cavernosis quodammodo atque tortuosis latibulis fraudulentum" (S. Aug. in Joan. Evang. tract lxix.).

For the consummation of this work He had thirsted throughout His earthly life. "When He was twelve years old," He said to "His parents," "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" (S. Luke ii. 49). And a little before His passion He said to His disciples, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straightened until it be accomplished—*ὥς οὖν τελεσθῆναι*" (xii. 50). His zeal never flagged nor wavered, but grew more intense and more "consuming" (Psa. lxix. 9), as the consummation of His work drew nearer. And on the eve of its accomplishment, amidst all the agonies of His crucifixion, "Jesus saith, I thirst." But this thirst to fulfil His Father's will and His mission for which He was sent into the world, included—

2. A thirst for our salvation. "For what dost Thou thirst?" says S. Bernard. "Surely for the redemption of mankind and the joy of man's salvation."¹ "For what dost Thou thirst, Lord Jesus?" says S. Augustine; "for wine from the vine, or water from the river? Thy thirst was my salvation, Thy food my redemption."² If, for a moment, the unutterable anguish of the sufferings of His soul had made Him cry, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me" (S. Matt. xxvi. 39), He now, even while He drinks it to the dregs, says, "I thirst."

3. But "for the joy that was set before Him," He "endured the cross, despising the shame," says the apostle; and what this "joy" was he intimates in the words that follow—

¹ "Quid ergo sitis? Certe solam redemptionem hominis, et gaudium humanæ salutis."

² "Quid sitis, Domine Jesu? Vinum de vite, aut aquam de flumine? Sitis Tua, salus mea; cibus Tuus, redemptio mea!"

"and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. xii. 2). "If ye loved me," He had said to His disciples, "ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father" (S. John xvi. 28). For this, surely, as the reward for His perfect fulfilment of the mission on which He was sent, His longing must have been intense indeed; and all the more intense after the bitter feeling of separation of which, in His last cry, He had complained. Those words of His father David had never been uttered with such earnestness as His: "As the heart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" (Psa. xlii. 1, 2).

Many are the thoughts which this cry suggests to us.

1. First, as a natural thirst.

(a.) Was not this an expiation of our many sins through excess and appetite? If the world was ruined by eating of the forbidden tree, the second Adam, thirsting on the tree of shame, atoned for that first transgression. If the luxuriousness of the epicure, and the surfeit of the glutton and the drunkard have made "their throat an open sepulchre" (Rom. iii. 13) to bury in abuse the gifts which God has provided for their use, He who hath "given us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Tim. vi. 17), denies Himself one drop of water, and is indebted to a stranger and an enemy for a spongeful of vinegar to moisten His lips in the agony of death.

(b.) Is not this, then, a lesson to those who are, or profess to be, "crucified with Christ" (Gal. ii. 20), to deny ourselves delicacies, as our Lord denied Himself neces-

saries? It may seem a small matter to many; but if we remember that it was through appetite that sin entered into the world, and how much the tasting of that forbidden fruit has cost mankind; and if we bear in mind the connection which our Lord evidently designs to impress upon us between the rich man's "faring sumptuously every day" on earth, and "in hell" craving in vain for a drop of water to "cool his tongue" (S. Luke xvi. 19, 24), we shall see that our Lord's thirst upon the Cross has a deep significance, and that from His example, and in honour to His dying agonies, we should set a curb on our luxurious desires, and in the path of self-denial, which He has appointed for all His disciples (S. Matt. xvi. 24), follow our Lord.

(c.) May we not learn from this word, "I thirst," how *we* may relieve our Lord's sufferings? We think that, could we only have heard His plaintive cry, we, too, would "straight-way" have "run," through whatever dangers and difficulties, to minister to His need, just as those three mighty men of David's worthies "brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David," when he "longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem" (2 Sam. xxiii. 15, 16). Well, our Lord tells us how we may do it. The poor are His special representatives;¹ "in all their afflictions He is afflicted" (Isa. lxiii. 9). He that "giveth a cup of cold water" to the thirsty traveller as he plods along his weary way, or moistens the parched lips of the sufferer on his sick

¹ "Quotiescunque manum extendis, cogita Christum" (Hier. ad. Func.).

bed, "inasmuch as he does it to one of the least of these, Christ's brethren, he does it unto Him" (S. Matt. xxv. 40); and if, whenever we hear the cry "I thirst" from any human lips, we hasten to minister unto them, we are assured, on the testimony of His own word, we "give Him drink" (ver. 35).

"Give Thee to drink ! Yes, had I seen Thee here,
Athirst and weary (seated on the well),¹
Oh, how my heart had throbb'd Thine heart to cheer
This feeble tongue it hath no words to tell !
But, Jesus, say, what wouldst thou have me do,
To prove the love I *then* would fain have show'd ?
'I have a little band, a faithful few,
Pilgrims and strangers on their homeward road.
Whene'er you see *them* weary on the way,
Athirst or fainting, *then* remember Me ;
Think that thou hearest Me, the Master, say,
"Give Me to drink !"—this boon I crave of thee.
And oh, when thou shalt sit with Me beside
The river of life's water, cool and clear,
The same which issued from My wounded side,
When in death's agony I thirsted here,
I will give thee to drink—oh, such a draught
Of life and love from My unbounded store,
As no poor thirsty spirit ever quaff'd,
And thou shalt drink with Me, and thirst no more !'"

2. As a supernatural thirst.

(a.) Did Christ so thirst to do the will of His Father, and to finish His work ? With what earnestness, then, and with what diligence of effort, we should pray and try to act up to our prayer, "Our Father, which art it heaven, Thy

¹ From a hymn in the "Lyra Anglicana" on our Lord thirsting at Jacob's well.

will be done !” If He was so zealous, we can well understand why it is that of all the sins that He hates the most, none is so loathsome to Him as that of lukewarmness (Rev. iii. 15, 16). The will of God demands alike both our active and passive obedience. To do that will or to suffer it is our chiefest business and blessedness ; and to those who are really zealous, as Christ was, and whose meat it is to do that will, there is a whole eternity of blessedness contained in that one promise of heaven’s happiness, “ His servants shall serve Him ” (xxii. 3).

(b.) Did Jesus so thirst for our salvation? Then the salvation of our souls must be indeed a precious thing, the “one thing needful” (S. Luke x. 42), the “pearl of great price” to buy which we may well “sell all that we have” (S. Matt. xiii. 46). His cry, “I thirst,” bids us pity ourselves, if we will not pity Him.¹ He thirsts that we may thirst after Him, and that He may satisfy our thirst with the waters of the river of life. Blessed are they who can answer back to their crucified Lord, “I thirst.” “I stretch forth my hands unto Thee ; my soul thirsteth after Thee, as a thirsty land” (Psa. cxliii. 6). Oh that we may satisfy His thirst by accepting the salvation which He longs to bestow, that in us He may “see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied” (Isa. liii. 11) ! Otherwise we shall, in a degree, bring back again the bitterness of His dying hour, and offer to Him only the sour vinegar of an evil life, and in us will be fulfilled the sad complaint which He made of old, “ Their

¹ “ O Domine, quid sitis? Fidem vestram, salutem vestram, gaudium vestrum, plus animarum vestrarum quam corporis Mei cruciatis Mei terret ; et si non Mei, saltem vestri miseremini ” (S. Bernard).

grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter ; their wine is the poison of dragons " (Deut. xxxii. 32, 33) ; for, as Origen says, " They who have knowledge according to Christ's doctrine, but live badly, offer unto Christ wine mingled with gall ; they who apply Christ's precepts contrary to the truth, put vinegar on the sponge, and apply it to His mouth." ¹ How shall we give " a vessel full of vinegar " to Him who has given to us, for our strengthening and refreshing, the good wine of His own most precious blood ?

" ' I thirst ! ' The word is full of pain,
Of fever-rack, of human anguish,
Of gaping wounds that life-blood drain
And leave the heart to faint and languish :
And yet not this—not this alone
Hath caused that piteous sad outburst ;
Not human pain hath made Thee moan,
Nor human want that mystic thirst.
Thirst, to see Justice satisfied ;
Thirst, to save sinners tempest-tossed ;
Thirst, to pour our Love's boundless tide
On souls that all unloved were lost ;—
This was Thy thirst, and this Thy pain,
This the deep grief Thy bosom nurst.
Say, Jesus, say that word again,
Still for Thy creatures, Jesu, thirst !
Thirst, that at last our hearts may give
Torrents of love that thirst to slake ;
Thirst, that we too may thirsting live,
Thirsting to die for Thy sweet sake,
Thirsting to see Thee face to face,
Thirsting these earthly bonds to sever,
Thirsting for that last, long embrace,
In which such thirst is quenched for ever ! "

(Lyra Messianica.)

¹ Origen in Matt.

VI.

Τετέλεισται.

Consummatum est.

It is finished.

S. JOHN xix. 30.

THESE are great and glorious words—such words as only He could speak who spake as “never man spake.” Never till now, since man was first created, had it been possible for human lips to utter truly such words of triumph. Look at any of the most highly gifted and distinguished of our race, whose lives have been the most busy, whose genius the most brilliant, whose labours the most successful, in the camp, in literature, science, or art,—where shall we find the man who could truly say, as he looked back on his life and on his work, that his attainments had fully reached the standard at which he aimed; who could confidently declare, as he surveyed in retrospect all his ambitions, aims, and ideals, “It is finished”? The noblest and the best have ever been ready to confess that their work was at best but fragmentary, and their success only partial and therefore incomplete, and have been forced to be content, if they have been the means, under God, of contributing some little to the advancement of knowledge, and the improvement or comfort

of mankind, and have left behind them hints for others to develop, and designs of beauty and usefulness for others to mould and perfect. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect (*τετελείωμαι*" Phil. iii. 12), is the humble acknowledgment of one and all.

But here is One who had a mission more arduous, and a work more important, than any son of man had ever received, who is able to say, in His dying hour, without exaggeration and without fear, "It is finished."

There is, surely, a profound significance in this cry. Men do not speak thus of any trivial undertaking, but of work in which they have long toiled, and which, after great pains and difficulties, they have at last successfully accomplished. And so in this one word *τετέλεσται* we cannot doubt there is abundant meaning. The ancients used to esteem it an excellence to make a drop of language express an ocean of matter.¹ Once only has such a word been found; and it was spoken now and here. This one word, echoed alike in heaven and hell, was caught up, we doubt not, by the sons of light and of darkness, and was made the theme of praises and blasphemies, of exultation and despair. But neither to angels nor to devils is this word of so much concern as it is to us men. Let us, therefore, inquire what it is of which our Lord here says, "It is finished." And first—

1. We may judge from the context that our Lord's first thought was of the fulfilment of Scripture.² "After this,"

¹ *πέλαγον πραγμάτων ἐν σταλάγματι ῥηματῶν*

² "'Consummatum est,' ait; hoc est, completæ sunt scripturæ. . . nihil minus pertuli quam Me passurum esse prædixi" (S. Leonis Magni. Sermon. lv.).

the evangelist says, "Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished" (or, finished; *τετέλεσται*—exactly the same word there as here), "knowing that all things were accomplished that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar, and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it to His mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished." The primary meaning of this word, then, seems to be, "all is now finished that the Scripture might be fulfilled." There is not a type, promise, or prophecy, relating to this portion of the work of the Messiah, which is not now fulfilled. Looking back upon it all, "the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms" (S. Luke xxiv. 44), "It is finished."

Now we see how the "Seed of the woman," promised in the Book of Genesis (iii. 15), has "bruised the serpent's head," though "the serpent has bruised His heel;" how the very Paschal Lamb, typified in the Book of Exodus (xii. 23), has been "sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. v. 7), and has "taken away the sin of the world" (S. John i. 29); how the High Priest of the Book of Leviticus (ix. 7), the true Aaron (Heb. ix. 12), has made atonement for us; how the "Star" of the Book of Numbers (xxiv. 17) has "come out of Jacob, and the Sceptre has risen out of Israel;" how the "Prophet like unto Moses," of the Book of Deuteronomy (xviii. 15-19) has been "raised up," "a Teacher come from God" (S. John iii. 2), of whom He has commanded, "Hear ye Him" (S. Matt. xvii. 5); how the true Joshua, the Deliverer of Israel, "the Captain of our Salvation" (Heb. ii. 10), has vanquished for us our spiritual foes, and opened

before us the land of promise; how the greater than Samson, of the Book of Judges, has delivered us from the Philistines, and of whom it is true in a far wider and deeper and more blessed sense than it was of Samson, that "the dead which He slew at His death were more than they which He slew in His life" (xvi. 30): how, as the Boaz of the Book of Ruth, He is our near kinsman who hath a right and the will to redeem us, and marry us unto Himself (iv. 1-13); how in Him God hath raised up "a faithful Priest," as He promised by Samuel, saying, He "shall do according to that which is in Mine heart and in My mind (1 Sam. ii. 35).

"Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that have followed after, as many as have spoken, likewise foretold of these days" (Acts iii. 24). David's Psalms throughout testify of Him, David's Son and Lord, in His divinity and humanity, in His humiliation and exaltation. He is Isaiah's "Immanuel" (vii. 14), the "Child born, the Son given, whose name is Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace" (ix. 6), the "Rod from the stem of Jesse, and the Branch grown out of his roots" (xi. 1), the "Foundation Stone, elect, precious" (xxviii. 16), the "King that should reign in righteousness, (xxxii. 1), the Lord God who should "feed His flock like a shepherd" (xl. 11), the "despised and rejected of men," the "Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," who "was wounded for our transgression, and bruised for our iniquities," who "was numbered among the transgressors, and bare the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors;" who "made His grave with the wicked, and

with the rich in His death" (liii. 3, 5, 12, 9); the "Anointed of the Lord to preach good tidings to the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, and comfort all that mourned" (lxi. 1, 2), the mysterious One who "came from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save," who "trod the wine-press alone" (lxiii. 1, 3). He is Jeremiah's "Righteous Branch," the "King who should reign and prosper, and should execute judgment and justice in the earth," "the Lord our Righteousness" (xxiii. 5, 6), "the Redeemer of Jacob" (xxxi. 11). He is Ezekiel's Shepherd and Prince (xxxiv. 12, 24). He is Daniel's "Messiah the Prince," who should "be cut off, but not for Himself, to finish the transgression, and make an end of sins, and make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness" (ix. 24, 25). He is Hosea's David the King to whom Israel shall in the last days return (iii. 5), "God's Son whom He called out of Egypt" (xi. 1). He is "the Lord our God" of whom Joel says that "He shall restore to us the years that the locust hath eaten" (ii. 23, 25), and after whose days, God should "pour out His Spirit upon all flesh" (ver. 28). He it is of whom Amos says that "He shall raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof" (ix. 11); who, according to Obadiah's prophecy, should bring "deliverance upon Mount Zion, and holiness," and who should possess the kingdom (vv. 17, 21); who, like Jonah, should be "three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (i. 17); of whom Micah foretold that He should be born in Bethlehem, though His "goings forth had

been from of old, from everlasting" (v. 2); of whom Nahum wrote, as One "that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace" (i. 15); of whom Habakkuk wrote that in His days the "just should live by his faith," and that eventually "the earth should be filled with the knowledge of His glory, as the waters cover the sea" (ii. 4, 14), and that "His brightness was as the light; He had horns coming out of His hand; and there was the hiding of His power" (iii. 4). He it is of whom Zephaniah said, "Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing" (iii. 14, 17). He is Haggai's "Desire of all nations," who should fill His temple with glory, and by His manifested presence make "the glory of the latter house greater than that of the former" (ii. 7, 9). He is "the Branch," the "King of Zion, just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding on an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass," of whom Zechariah wrote (vi. 12; ix. 9); who, though He was God's Fellow, should be smitten with the sword of His wrath (xiii. 7), and should be "sold for thirty pieces of silver" (xi. 12, 13), and "wounded in His hands in the house of His friends" (xiii. 6), but, "by the blood of His covenant," should preach hope and deliverance to the "prisoners in the pit wherein is no water" (ix. 11, 12). He is "the Lord whom they sought," of whom Malachi foretold that "He should suddenly come to His temple, and "sit as a refiner and purifier of silver" (iii. 1, 3), the "Sun of righteousness which should arise with healing in His wings" (iv. 2).

"Think not," our Lord said at the beginning of His ministry, "that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (S. Matt. v. 17). And as the evangelists record the events of our Lord's life, over and over again we read, "All this was done that the Scriptures might be fulfilled, which saith," or, "as it is written in the words of the prophet," or, "as it is said in the Book of Psalms." So Jesus Himself said to His disciples, while He was yet with them after His resurrection, "All things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning me" (S. Luke xxiv. 44). And now, "Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished" (S. John xix. 28), and that the Scriptures in their minutest details were perfectly fulfilled, "knowing that the things concerning Him had an end" (S. Luke xxii. 37), said, "It is finished."

2. But, secondly, we must understand this saying of the "work which the Father had given Him to do;" of which our Lord had said at Jacob's well, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work—*τελειώσω αὐτοῦ τὸ ἔργον*" (S. John iv. 34); and the night before He suffered, He said, "I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work—*τὸ ἔργον ἐτελείωσα*—which Thou gavest Me to do. I have manifested Thy name unto the men whom Thou gavest Me out of the world" (xvii. 4, 6). What, then, was His "work"?

(a.) First, doubtless, it was to glorify His Father and manifest His name. In all ages and in all climes men had been "feeling after God," and inquiring after His name. Having lost the knowledge of Him and His perfections,

they still naturally associated Him in their minds with all that was grand, mysterious, and sublime. They heard His voice in the thunder, and His footsteps in the storm. Their worship was one of fear; and, by the costliest sacrifices, sometimes even of their own sons and daughters, they tried to propitiate His favour, and avert His wrath, giving "their first-born for their transgression—the fruit of their body for the sin of their soul" (Mic. vi. 7). The Greeks associated Him with the idea of loveliness and beauty, the Romans with that of law and order: but with the former, religion degenerated into a sensuous æstheticism; with the latter, into a stern sense of duty and submission to fate. The philosophers of both these centres of civilization regarded Him as the Impersonation of all moral virtues, the Fountain of wisdom, the Source of blessedness; but they taught their disciples to approach Him rather with the reasonings of the intellect than with the affections of the heart. Even the Jews, who had a special revelation from Heaven, and to whom "were committed the oracles of God" (Rom. iii. 2), knew Him only very imperfectly. But when Jesus came into the world He manifested His name as the Father, the God of Love. In His first public ministration we find that He calls God by the name of Father no less than sixteen times. He tells us throughout His teaching that the God whom He reveals is no angry tyrant, whose wrath we must first pacify before He will deign to look upon us with favour; no weak and capricious impersonation of the merely softer and more sensuous virtues; no blind and inexorable destiny, deaf to human misery, and relentless in its march of pitiless retribution; no abstraction of goodness and

wisdom, intelligible only to the gifted few, and accessible to none ;—but as a loving Father, who “careth for us” (1 S. Pet. v. 7) more than we can care for ourselves. He declared that “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son” (S. John iii. 16), and that He, when He came into our world to make atonement for us, came to do the will of the Father which sent Him. At the same time, He reveals to us in His doctrine how unspeakably great are the perfections of God, how spotless His holiness, how strict His justice, how terrible His hatred of sin. In His death on Calvary we “behold,” at one glance, “the goodness and the severity of God” (Rom. xi. 22): His goodness, in providing such a salvation for us, so costly and so efficacious ; His severity, in requiring that to be efficacious it should be of necessity so costly. And having shown in His life a beautiful reflection—nay, rather, “the express image” of the Father’s perfection ; and having, in His death, set His seal to the righteousness of the Divine law ; and having, both in His life and death, perfectly fulfilled all its requirements, and satisfied all its demands, He “glorified His Father on the earth, and manifested His name” to His own (S. John xvii. 4, 6), and that so entirely and so completely, that now, in His last moments, He can lift up His eyes to Heaven, and say, “It is finished.”

(b.) But His work on earth related not only to His Father, but to us. There were two things He was pledged to perform for us, to fulfil the law which we had broken, and then to bear the penalty which we had incurred.

In relation to the first, He said, “Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness” (S. Matt. iii. 15). From the

days of Adam's fall God had "looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that would understand and seek after God" (Psa. xiv. 2). But He looked in vain for one who should fulfil all His will. The verdict pronounced on one generation after another was ever the same: "There is none righteous, no, not one" (ver. 3). "Conceived in sin, and shapen in iniquity" (Psa. li. 5), each had come into the world tainted with the stain of original sin, and this sin had grown with his growth, and the will to do good was, even in the best, weakened and impaired. The obedience of the most perfect was still disobedience; "for whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (S. James ii. 10), and the purest and most perfect had cause to confess, "My sins are more in number than the hairs of my head" (Psa. xl. 12). But here at last is one who from His cradle to His cross perfectly fulfilled the whole law. Born of a virgin mother, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, He was conceived without any, the least, taint of original sin, and from His earliest to His latest breath there was not so much as one sinful thought indulged to sully His spotless soul. As He was a "Lamb without blemish" of original, so He was "without spot" of actual, sin (1 S. Pet. i. 19). "Loving the Lord His God with all His heart, and mind, and soul, and strength, and His neighbour as Himself" (S. Matt. xxii. 37-40), He fulfilled the law to its minutest jot or tittle, and that so continuously and so perfectly that, looking back upon it, and comparing His performance with its requirements, He can now say, "It is finished." Thus is He become to us "the Lord our Righteousness" (Jer. xxiii. 6), and "as

by the disobedience of one many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One many are made righteous" (Rom. v. 19).

But besides doing for us all that the law enjoined, He suffered for us all that the law required. He "was made sin" (*i.e.* a sin-offering) "for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. vi. 21), and though He had "done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth," yet "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities : the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed" (Isa. liii. 5, 9). All the sins of all sinners from Adam to his latest descendant, He bore and made atonement for. Our sins of to-day and yesterday, of our youth and childhood and later life, which are so numberless for multitude, so measureless for magnitude, He bore them all. In the hour of our penitential sorrow, when our sins are pressing the most heavily on our conscience, and we are pondering fearfully whether we may hope for pardon and forgiveness after sins of such aggravation and enormity, we may still hear that loving cry addressed to us, cheering our hearts, and chasing our fears away, "It is finished : " the ransom is offered and accepted ; the debt, to the uttermost farthing, is paid, and Divine justice does not need to be paid twice. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect ? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth ? It is Christ that died" (Rom. viii. 33, 34).

And this consideration shows us how unnecessary, as well as heretical, is that doctrine of Calvin and others, that our Lord's sufferings were not now terminated, but that, after

death, His soul experienced the torments of hell, which were due to our transgression. This opinion we shall have occasion to notice hereafter ; it is only necessary to refer to it here, as it is so obviously confuted by this saying, "It is finished." If this is the consummation, there is no part left undone ; and if at the creation of the world, when "the foundations thereof were fastened, and the corner-stone thereof was laid, the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job xxxviii. 6, 7), how must they have filled the heavenly courts now with their hallelujahs of adoring praise ! Nay, if God Himself, when the world was made and stocked and tenanted, "saw everything that He had made," and pronounced it to be "very good" (Gen. i. 31), and rested on the Sabbath day from all His work which God created and made" (ii. 3), with what infinite satisfaction must He now have looked on the consummation of His redemptive work, and with what complacency of delight must He have entered upon that rest of the great Sabbath which was now at hand ! For surely—

(c.) Our Lord, as He was perfect Man, suffered as a man. His human nature was keenly sensitive to pain, both of soul and body ; and though we cannot doubt that this cry, "It is finished," had, as we have said, reference first to the accomplishment of Scripture, and next, to the work which the Father had given Him to do, it referred also, doubtless, to the pain and torture which had so long and so heavily oppressed Him. If from so many beds of suffering, His saints in all ages have longed for their release and panted for the summons to their Maker's presence, how much more must the "beloved Son, in whom He is well-

pleased," have rejoiced in the thought, "I leave the world, and go to the Father" (S. John xvi. 28). He had said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," (S. Matt. xxvi. 38); and death is now close at hand, His sorrows are, therefore, all but over. His enemies have done their worst; He has drunk to the very dregs the cup of suffering; and now, with a feeling of relief, and of calm, patient content and gladness, He is going "where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest" (Job. iii. 17).

Many lessons we learn from this sixth saying of our Lord: as—

1. How infinite and invincible was the love of Christ for us: as we learn to appreciate it more highly, we should learn also to reciprocate it more sincerely. He is now come to the fore-ordained end of His earthly life, with all its labours and sufferings; and in His last moments He seems to say to each of us, "Judge, I pray you, betwixt Me and My vineyard. What more could have been done to My vineyard that I have not done in it?" (Isa. v. 3, 4). Not a single moment of His life has He reserved from us: His strength, His blood, His merits, His life, all are laid at our feet. Nothing that the law of God could exact, nothing that our sins could require, has been spared. The price of our redemption, to the uttermost farthing, is paid: the work of our salvation is perfectly accomplished.—"It is finished." If, then, He reserved nothing from us, shall we not give all to Him? It is a very little "all" that we have to give; but, such as it is, He will accept it; nay, He asks for it in return—"My son, give Me thy heart" (Prov. xxiii. 26). Shall

not our answer be, "Lord, Thou knowest all things : Thou knowest that I love Thee?" (S. John xxi. 17).

2. We may learn to rest our whole faith on Christ and His finished work ; not with a mere idle acquiescence, as if, because He has done all, we need do nothing. This would be to "turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness" (S. Jude 4), and to "make the things which should have been for our wealth to be unto us an occasion of falling" (Psa. lxix. 22). Much less may we "continue in sin, that grace may abound" (Rom. vi. 1). Shall we requite our Saviour's love in being crucified for our sins, by loving the sins which crucified Him? God forbid. When S. John has made the clearest statement of the Divine mercy, and shown that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin," and that "if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 Epist. i. 7, 9), he is careful to add, "These things write I unto you, that ye sin not" (ii. 1). Christ has indeed done all in the way of merit and atonement. We cannot, by our repentance or obedience, add to His finished work. There must be no half measure in our faith, trusting in part to Christ, in part to ourselves. Our repentance, at the best, cannot make amends for one sin ; and our obedience, for the future, even if it were perfect, can never cancel our disobedience. Jesus only must be our hope and stay ; His finished work, His atoning sacrifice, His all-sufficient merits—this must be our only plea for mercy and forgiveness.

"Nothing in my hand I bring ;
Simply to Thy cross I cling.
Could my tears for ever flow,
Could my zeal no languor know,

All for sin could not atone,—
Thou must save, and Thou alone."

3. If the work of Christ for us, whereby the believer is justified, is "finished," let us not doubt that the work in us, whereby the believer is sanctified, shall be finished also. Jesus is not only "the Author" but also "the Finisher" of the work of our sanctification, as He is of our justification. Of this the apostle is "confident, that He who hath begun the good work in you will perform it (*ἐπιτελέσει*) to the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. i. 6). If we sometimes are tempted to despair of ourselves, let us strengthen ourselves with David's profession of faith, "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me: Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of Thine own hands" (Psa. cxxxviii. 8). Let us look once more to the cross of Calvary, and listen once more to this cry of the Crucified One, and we shall learn to believe, that if we thwart not His work by our selfishness and sin, as that work was finished, so also shall this; in us "He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied" (Isa. liii. 11); and of our justification, sanctification, and complete salvation, He shall one day say, "It is finished."

4. We may learn to ask, What about our own work, which God has given us to do? May we dare to hope that, when our last hour is at hand, we shall be able to say with reference to our work, "It is finished"? In what stage is our work now? There is God to glorify, our neighbours to edify, the world to evangelize, our own souls to save. Where is our work to-day? Is it far advanced? or is it only in its earliest stages—or is not yet begun? Sadly do the

Saviour's words echo in the chambers of our conscience—"I have not found thy works perfect (*πεπληρωμένα*) before God," (Rev. iii. 2). Does our work advance only very slowly, even when we do our best? Does each step cost us an effort? Do our failures seem to exceed our successes? Does our work at best seem very fragmentary and incomplete? We may remember, for our encouragement, that though our aim must be perfection, we must not despair if we fall very far short of it. One alone has finished His work: but any one who sets manfully to work, with a resolute heart and devoted will; who is doing his best, "bearing all things, believing all things, hoping all things, enduring all things" (1 Cor. xiii. 7); looking, in his most desponding moments, and in his most successful also, ever to the cross of Christ, and resting all his faith and hope in Him;—his work, though it may seem poor, and mean, and insignificant, though incomplete, is yet imperishable; his very failures become successes, as being necessary steps in his Christian experience. And, after all, we may remember, that what belongs to the Head, belongs also to the members: "Where my Head reigns, there I believe that I am reigning."¹ Even Christ's work *seemed* to the last an utter failure; yet in His last hour He cries, "It is finished." If Christ's life be ours, His sufferings ours, His merits ours, ours too shall be His victory; and at our last hour, though we may and shall acknowledge our work to be poor and worthless, yet as we look on His work which He has done for us, and on His work which He has been doing in us, we shall be able to cry, not with our feeble,

¹ "Ubi caput meum regnat, ibi me regnare credo" (S. Augustine).

broken voice, but with His "loud voice" of victory and triumph, "It is finished."¹

"Now ends the hour of heavy sadness :
 'Tis finished,' the Redeemer saith.
O word of victory, sound of gladness,
 Thou robbest all the sting from death !
How blest by Jesus justified !
Who shall condemn, since Christ hath died ?
Thou diedst for us, and we are Thine.
 Lord, when I reach my life's last day,
 Be this my joy, in death to say,
 'Tis finished : ' Christ and Heaven are mine."
 (Lyra Messianica.)

¹ Tholuck's "Life from the Cross," p. 292.

VII.

Πατερ, εἰς χεῖράς σου παραθήσομαι τὸ πνεῦμά μου.

Pater, in manus tuas commendo spiritum meum.

Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.

S. LUKE xxiii. 46.

THERE was a strange and most significant pause between our Lord's fifth saying on the cross, "I thirst," and this last saying. S. John tells us that when Jesus said, "I thirst," He said it, "knowing that all things were now accomplished that the Scriptures might be fulfilled" (xix. 28). But still death did not lay hold upon Him. Again He cried, with a loud voice, "It is finished;" but even now death did not claim Him. And the reason is evident—Death had nothing in Him. He had not, in the least degree, inherited the taint of Adam's transgression, and therefore He had no part in the penalty pronounced upon Adam, "Thou shalt surely die" (Gen. ii. 17). And He was as free from actual as He was from original sin; and therefore, that One who was perfectly innocent should receive that which is expressly called "the wages of sin" (Rom. vi. 23); or that the punishment of unrighteousness should be visited on One who was altogether righteous, would have been opposed to the most fundamental principles of the Divine government. It

would also have been a direct violation of the terms of the Divine covenant, which promised, "This do, and thou shalt live" (S. Luke x. 28). And knowing this, our Lord had declared before, that the universal law of death had and could have no claim on His person. He had told the Jews, "I lay down my life (*τὴν ψυχὴν μου τίθημι*) for the sheep." "Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (S. John x. 15, 17, 18). And hence, to show that His death was not produced by physical exhaustion, "He cried with a loud voice" (S. Mark xv. 37); and then "bowed His head," as if in token that of His own free will and accord He submitted, and was obedient unto death. So S. Chrysostom explains it: "It was not that He bowed His head because He expired, but because He bowed His head He then expired; by mention of all which things the Evangelists show that He was Lord of all."¹ All the four Evangelists are careful to tell us that He "gave up," or "yielded up the ghost,"² breathing out His spirit, and, as S. Luke tells us, commending it into His Father's hands. And that these signs of the spon-

¹ καίτοι οὐ μετὰ τὸ κλίνειν τὴν κεφαλὴν τὸ ἐκπνεῦσαι ἐνταῦθα δὲ τοῦναντίον. Οὐδέ γὰρ ἐπειδὴ ἐξέπνευσεν, ἐκλινε τὴν κεφαλὴν, ὅπερ ἐφ' ἡμῶν γίνεται· ἀλλ' ἐπειδὴ ἐκλινε τὴν κεφαλὴν, τότε ἐξέπνευσε (S. Chrys. in Joan. Hom. lxxv.).

"Quasi arbiter exeundi suscipiendique corporis, emisit spiritum, non amisit" (S. Ambros. de Incarn. c. 5).

"Non eam (carnem ejus) deseruit virtus; sed quia voluit, quam voluit, et quomodo voluit" (S. Aug. de Trinit. l. 4. c. 13).

² ἀφῆκε τὸ πνεῦμα (S. Matt. xxvii. 50). ἐξέπνευσε (S. Mark xv. 37; S. Luke, xxiii. 46). παρέδωκε τὸ πνεῦμα (S. John xix. 30).

taneousness of His death were not lost on those who witnessed them, we are assured by S. Mark, who says of the centurion at the foot of the cross, "And when the centurion, which stood over against Him, saw that He so cried out, and gave up the ghost (*ὅτι οὕτω κράζας ἐξέπνευσεν*), he said, Truly this Man was the Son of God" (xv. 39). And on the day of Pentecost S. Peter, speaking of our Lord's death and resurrection, tells the Jews that, though they had crucified Jesus of Nazareth, yet "God had raised Him up, having loosed the pains of death, *because it was not possible that He should be holden of it*" (Acts ii. 24). So that we see, as death had no power over our Lord till of His own accord He submitted to it, so, even when it had come upon Him, it could not retain possession of Him. And therefore, while we listen to the very last words which He spoke in the moment of death, we must be careful to remember that it is a spontaneous and a sacrificial act in which He is engaged; and that His death is not forced upon Him as the result of necessity, but it is only the crowning act of His self-oblation, the last earthly link in the chain of His everlasting love.

Having made these prefatory observations, we may now proceed to the consideration of this last saying of our Lord. And we observe at the outset, that He begins it, as He began the first, with the word "Father."

"*Father.*" Since He said it last, the devil and his agents had been busily engaged in trying to shake His faith and confidence in His own Sonship, and His Father's love. "They that passed by reviled Him, wagging their heads, and saying, If Thou be the Son of God, come down from

the cross. Likewise also the chief priests mocking Him, with the scribes and elders, said, He trusted in God ; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him ; for He said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also, which were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth" (S. Matt. xxvii. 39-44). And these cries of blasphemous derision were only the echoes of other more malignant voices, which, though unheard by others, were pouring into our Lord's ears suggestions of doubt and despair, a repetition of the old temptations in the wilderness, wherewith, though He had then "departed from Him for a season" (S. Luke iv. 13) he had now returned to vex His soul.¹ The supernatural darkness, too, which had been over all the land, was but the shadow of a more terrible darkness which had, for a time, overspread His soul, out of which He uttered that exceeding great and bitter cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" But now all this darkness is removed. The light of His Father's countenance, which had ever been the sunshine of His life, beams brightly upon Him again ; and as, in His very first words recorded in the Gospel, He had called God His Father, saying, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" (S. Luke ii. 49), so now when His business on earth was finished, He still, in His last words, calls God His Father, maintaining and professing His stedfast faith, triumphing over the doubts and defiance with which men and devils had tried to obscure and disturb His soul, upholding still the truth of the words which He had spoken so "plainly" to His

¹ "Vi aggressurus postea, quem illecebris corrumpere non potuerat, Joh. xiv. 30" (Grotius).

disciples the night before, "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father" (S. John xvi. 28).

2. But what is it that our Lord says to the Father? what is His last utterance before He dies? Is it something new and original, which He bequeaths to us as the lesson of His death? No: He who "knew what was in man" knew well enough that, however men in their lifetime affect novelty and originality, in their last moments they fall back upon old and familiar words as their most natural and most easy forms of expression. There are many who go to church and listen with hardly disguised contempt and impatience to the plain and homely exposition of the truth as it has been received from the beginning. They must have the truth presented to them with brilliance of thought, eloquence of speech, and boldness of speculation; else they care not to listen to it at all. But on their dying bed, when the soul is fearfully putting forth her feelers, and the echoes of the eternal world sound nearer and more distinct, the "old, old story," told in the simplest words and the homeliest manner is, after all, their mainstay and support: and, as the mind becomes feebler, and the ear less able to receive and the memory to retain new and unfamiliar sounds and forms of expression, the old well-known words of the Bible story, and the oft-repeated prayers of the Church fall on the ear like sweetest music, and as "songs of the olden time." And so our Lord, in His last words, utters no new words of His own, but those of His father David, which he had spoken and written a thousand years before—"Into Thy hands I commend My spirit" (Psa. xxxi. 5).

"Into Thy hands." It is not possible for us to know, and it is not reverent, perhaps, to try to conjecture, how far our Lord's Divine knowledge enlightened His human soul. To attempt to draw a bold line of demarcation, and to say when His Divine nature assisted His humanity, or when His human nature acted independently of His Divinity, is only to confuse the mind, and to run unnecessary risks of misconceptions of the truth. So we may not inquire how far our Lord's human spirit was conscious of its future state. But in these words He uses an expression which is most suitable to us His brethren. As our earthly life terminates, and the cold finger of Death is paralysing, one after another, the members of the body, and the immortal spirit looks forward into the other world which is opening before it, we are met with a darkness which we cannot penetrate. The future state is one of mystery to us; and it is evidently designed so to be; for even those few who, after entering it, have been restored to earth, even our Lord Himself, after His resurrection, said, we may almost say, nothing about its locality, its conditions, or its employments. Even now, in spite of the fact that death has lost its sting, and the grave its victory, and that God has given us the victory over both through our Lord Jesus Christ, death is still a dark mystery, and we know little up to our last hour as to the place or the circumstances to which death shall introduce us. But this we know from Scripture, that when "the body shall return to the earth as it was, the spirit shall return unto the God who gave it" (Eccles. xii. 7). It does not concern us to know beforehand whither our spirit is going; it is enough, abundantly enough, to know that it is

going to "the Father of spirits" (Heb. xii. 9), and that in His hands, and under His guardianship, it must be safe, it must be blessed; for, as another Scripture saith, "The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them" (Wisd. iii. 1). Well indeed is it for us, that we have this precious assurance. For in Scripture we are told that the devil is the "prince of the power of the air;" (Eph. ii. 2), that the space between this world and the heavens is, for the present, his appointed dwelling-place. How, but for this assurance, must our trembling souls have shrunk from being disembodied, and being launched on that last journey through those unexplored and unknown tracts of space! But we are told by our Lord that as on earth God "hath given His angels charge" over His children "to keep them in all their ways" (Psa. xci. 11), so, at the moment of their death, it is by their ministration that the righteous are escorted to Paradise, and that they are "carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom" (S. Luke xvi. 22), so that no evil spirit may molest or hurt them in their passage to His kingdom. A sad and ominous silence is preserved as to the souls of the wicked; and it may be that when the dying sinner tells the awe-stricken bystanders that hideous forms of evil are around his bed, and are waiting to carry away his soul, such visions are not always mere phantoms of an excited and diseased imagination, but actual and awful realities allowed to present themselves to the eye of the body just before the spirit leaves its earthly tabernacle. Blessed shall we be, if, as our eyes close on this world, and our soul is on the eve of its departure, we can, by an act of faith and hope, commit

it into our Father's hands, with the assured consciousness that it will be for ever safe with Him.¹ But how cold and comfortless must be the sceptic's prospect in that dread hour! He too must breathe out his spirit; but into whose hands? The man who has denied the existence of his Maker, and has rejected the mercy of his Saviour; who has made a mock alike of heaven and its joys, and of hell and its torments; who has lulled himself to sleep with the idle dreams of annihilation or absorption into other substances; who has made destiny his deity, and necessity his law; who has made this world the theatre of his existence, and the grave the horizon of his hopes and fears; as the realities of eternity burst upon him, and he faces the awful presence of his denied Creator, how terrible his bewilderment, how utter his despair!

3. But what is meant by this word, "*I commend*"? It is not, with our Lord, merely the committing of His spirit into His Father's keeping. The word in the Greek (*παραθήσονται*; or, according to Tischendorf's reading, *παρατίθεμαι*,) is compounded of a preposition and a verb, the verb being the same as our Lord used in the above-quoted passage, "I lay down My life (*τὴν ψυχὴν μου τίθῃμι*) for the sheep." Fully to understand the sense of this expression, "I commend My spirit," we must consider it in connection with such passages as these—"Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin" (Isa. liii. 10); "The Son of man came to give His life a ransom for many" (S. Matt. xx. 28); "Who through

¹ "Quisquis in Christum credet, non efflabit in aerem animam moriens, sed ad fidelem depositarium confugiet, qui tuto conservet quicquid subtraditum est" (Calvin).

the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God" (Heb. ix. 14). As our souls were forfeit, He was about, by the offering of His soul, to redeem the forfeiture. The price of our redemption He thus, by a solemn act of His holy will, put into the hand of His Father, whose law we had broken, and whose justice must be satisfied. And the force of the preposition which is added to the verb is properly rendered by the word "commend," or "deposit." It is the same word as the apostle uses in his Second Epistle to Timothy, when he says, "I know whom I have believed, and that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him (τὴν παραθήκην μου) against that day" (i. 12). We see here, then, the perfect willingness with which our Lord offered Himself for us. He had said, in ages long gone by, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God" (Psa. xl. 7, 8), and now, as His last act, as He had already given His sacred body to suffering and shame, so now He gives His soul a willing offering and deposit for us.

4. But what is this, which our Lord commends into His Father's hands? "*My spirit.*" We are here brought face to face with a difficult philological and physiological problem, viz., what is the exact meaning of the word "spirit," and how far it is identical with the term "soul" or "life" —a subject presenting to us peculiar fascinations, and also, if we can rightly understand it, throwing much light on many obscure and imperfectly understood passages of Scripture. Suffice it to say, that it is generally thought that our Lord uses the expression here, of that internal immortal principle of life which is unquenched by death, nay, over which death has no power, and that we must understand

His words as signifying His entire and perfect trust that His spirit, immediately about to become disembodied, should still live safely in His Father's keeping, and be restored to re-animate His body, according to the words which the Holy Ghost spake before concerning Him—"My flesh also shall rest in hope : for Thou shalt not leave My soul in hell, neither shalt Thou suffer Thine holy One to see corruption" (Psa. xvi. 9, 10 ; Acts ii. 24-31).

"My." In thus commending His spirit into His Father's hands, He at the same time commended those of His brethren. As He is one with us, and we with Him,—as we are "crucified with Christ" (Gal. ii. 20), "dead with Christ" (Rom. vi. 8), "buried with Him" (ver. 4), "raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. ii. 6),—so our spirits are with His committed into the Father's hands, and shall not be left in hell.¹

It is observable that our Lord, though He is quoting the words of His father David, leaves off in the middle of the verse. David's words are, "Into Thy hands I commit my spirit. Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth" (Psa. xxxi. 5). These latter words could not apply to Christ, for He was the Redeemer of mankind, and being without sin had no need of being redeemed ; but *we* must add these words, for the great truth contained in the latter is the one ground for the confidence and faith expressed in the former part of the verse.

In the Church of Rome this prayer is prescribed to be

¹ "Non privato Sui respectu commendat Patri animum, sed omnium fidelium suorum animos quasi uno fasciculo complexus, ut simul cum Suâ servantur" (Pareus).

used on three occasions : *first*, in the daily office of compline ; and S. Basil explains that, when the night cometh, it is well to remember that we may never rise again in this life from our sleep, and that if a sudden death should thus overtake us, we shall be safe, if we have committed our spirits into the hands of our Redeemer ; *secondly*, in celebrating the Holy Eucharist, the priest is enjoined to say, first for himself, and then for the faithful present who are about to communicate, "Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit,"—the reason of which is, according to Bellarmine, that "the reception of the Blessed Eucharist is perilous, and at the same time so necessary, that we cannot approach too often, nor altogether absent ourselves without danger ;" *thirdly*, at the hour of death ; and in this sense, S. Hilary applies these words, "The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in, from this time forth, even for evermore" ("ex hoc et usque in seculum"). This, he says, is "an expectation of a future blessing, when, 'going out' from the body, all the faithful shall be reserved by the guardianship of the Lord to 'come in' to the kingdom of heaven."¹ It has been doubted, however, whether it be not better to use the dying prayer of S. Stephen, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts vii. 60). For, as it has been

¹ "Futuri boni expectatio est, cum exeuntes de corpore ad introitum illum regni cælestis per custodiam Domini fideles omnes reservabuntur, in sinu scilicet interim Abrahæ collocati, quo adire impios interjectum chaos inhihet, quousque introeundi rursus in regnum cælorum tempus adveniat. Custodiet ergo Dominus exitum, dum de corpore exeuntes, secreti ab impiis interjecto chao quiescant. Custodit et introitum, dum nos in æternum illud et beatum regnum introducit" (S. Hilar. Tract. in Psal. cxx.).

shown above, the word "commend," as used by our Lord, has a sacrificial signification, inasmuch as He was then "making His soul an offering for sin" (Isa. liii. 10).

It still remains to be considered what was the design of our Lord's descent into hell, and also what was the "hell" into which he descended—a subject which has occasioned many controversies, and which the many volumes which have been written have failed to exhaust. It will only be possible here to notice some few of the opinions that have been brought forward, and to offer a few suggestions as to the truth of the matter.

1. It was the general opinion of the primitive Church that our Lord, after His body died on the cross, went in His spirit to the intermediate world, that He might thus assert the reality of His human nature, and that He was "in all things made like unto His brethren" (Heb. ii. 17). And this was one of the arguments which the fathers used against the Apollinarian heresy, to prove that our Lord had a human soul as well as a human body. Justin Martyr, Irenæus, and S. Cyril of Alexandria give us the object of our Lord's descent into hell, that He might preach to the souls of the dead, during the time of His short sojourn among them: and in this they are followed by most of the early Fathers. This belief is grounded on the words of S. Peter—"Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit" (or, as it probably should be rendered, "but quick," or "alive, in His spirit,"): "by which" (or "in which" spirit) "He went and preached" (or proclaimed) "to the spirits in prison" (or,

in safe keeping), (1 S. Pet. iii. 18, 19). The words that follow have received a variety of interpretations, and it is perhaps impossible fully to understand them. He adds, "which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing" (ver. 20). Some have explained these words to mean that, during the time of the preparing of the ark, Christ, by His Spirit, preached to the antediluvian world, but that they then were disobedient, and were all involved in the common destruction; but to these were given a further opportunity of salvation, when, after His death, Christ preached to them in His disembodied spirit. This, however, would seem to be out of harmony with the ordinary laws of God's procedure, and at variance with the general teaching of Scripture that "now," in this life, and now only, "is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. vi. 2). At the same time, the express mention made by the apostle, of the antediluvians and their interest in Christ's descent into hell, must not be explained away. In so wide and general a judgment there must have been many who were swept away in the waters of the flood who had no opportunity of knowing anything of the terms proposed for their deliverance, and who, therefore, had none of the actual guilt which occasioned the flood, though they could not escape the punishment of it. Multitudes of children, "neither having done any good or evil" (Rom. ix. 11), and of others who, through mental infirmities, might have been unable to understand anything of the danger that was threatened, or the deliverance that was promised, would be thus involved in the general ruin. Many, also, we may hope, when the door

of the ark was finally shut, and the waters increasingly prevailed upon the earth, might be brought, through the extremity of their anguish, to cast themselves, in deep repentance, on the mercy of God, and thus, though their repentance was too late to avert the temporal, it might be in time to avert eternal destruction and ruin. And it might well be that such as these, with the memory of that grievous temporal judgment which they had here experienced, might, in the intermediate world, need the special assurance that they were not exempted from a participation in the benefits which the death of Jesus had wrought for mankind. But, however the latter part of this difficult passage may be interpreted, the former part is sufficiently clear, as teaching us that, after His death, the human spirit of Christ descended into Hades, and there "preached to the spirits in prison."

But still there is a diversity of opinion as to what this preaching was, and as to the effects which it produced. The earlier fathers seem to have taught that this preaching was not the giving of any further chance of repentance to those who in their lifetime had continued to the last impenitent, but was a proclamation to those who had died in the saving faith of His advent, that their hopes were now fulfilled and their salvation accomplished by the death which He had just died on Calvary. A most beautiful description of this proclamation, and of the longings which the spirits of the dead must have had to hear it, is given in one of Faber's poems :—

"Thousands of years had come and gone,
And slow the ages seemed to move
To those expectant souls that filled
That prison-house of patient love.

"It was a weary watch of theirs,
But onward still their hopes would press ;
Captives they were, yet happy too,
In their contented weariness.

"As noiseless tides the ample depths
Of some capacious harbour fill,
So grew the calm of that dread place
Each day with increase swift and still.

"Sweet tidings there Saint Joseph took ;
The Saviour's work had then begun,
And of His three and thirty years
But three alone were left to run.

"And Eve, like Joseph's shadow hung
About him wheresoe'er he went ;
She lived on thoughts of Mary's Child,
Trembled with hope, and was content.

"But see ! how hush'd the crowd of souls !
Whence comes the light of upper day ?
What glorious Form is this that finds
Through central earth its ready way ?

"'Tis God ! 'Tis Man ! the living Soul
Of Jesus, beautiful and bright,
The First-born of created things,
Flushed with a pure resplendent light.

"'Twas Mary's Child ! Eve saw Him come ;
She flew from Joseph's haunted side,
And worshipped, first of all that crowd,
The Soul of Jesus crucified."

But some of the early Church believed and taught that our Lord, besides preaching or proclaiming the tidings of the salvation which He had wrought to "the spirits in prison," delivered some of these who were there, and trans-

¹ "The Descent of Jesus to Limbus," Faber's Hymns, p. 91.

lated them to a better place;¹ grounding this opinion on those words which God spake by His prophet, "As for Thee also, by the blood of Thy covenant, I have sent forth Thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water. Turn you to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope; even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto thee" (Zech. ix. 11, 12). Others go so far as to maintain that one of the effects produced by our Lord's "preaching to them that were dead" was to empty the place of torment, and thus "triumph over the principalities and powers" who held them there. But the "triumph over principalities" of which the apostle speaks (Col. i. 15) was made on the cross. It is true that the Vulgate reads, "Palam triumphans illos in semetipso," and the Syriac also so renders it, as if the apostle said, "triumphing over them in Himself." But Origen,² S. Chrysostom,³ and Theophylact⁴ expressly refer it to the cross of which the apostle has just spoken, and Theodoret says that, so far from this triumph being attributed to the spirit of Christ when it had left His body, it is rather to be attributed to the body when it was left by the soul.⁵ And as for the opinion that, by Christ's

¹ καὶ κατήλθεν εἰς Ἀθην μόνος, ἀνῆλθε δὲ κατὰ πλήθους (Ignat. Epist. ad Trall.).

² "In eâ cruce diabolus cum principatibus suis et potestatibus affixus est cruci. Non tibi hoc videbitur verum, si tibi horum testem produxero Apostolum Paulum? *Quod erat*, inquit, *contrarium nobis, tulit illud de medio, affigens cruci suæ, exuens principatus et potestates traduxit, libere triumphans eas in ligno crucis*" (Hom. viii. in Josuam.).

³ In Ep. ad. Coloss. Hom. vi.

⁴ Θριαμβεύσας αὐτοὺς ἐν αὐτῷ· τουτέστιν, ἐν τῷ σταυρῷ τοὺς δαίμονας ἡττημένους δελῆας (In Ep. ad Col. cap. ii.).

⁵ Διὰ τοῦ οἰκείου σώματος πᾶσιν ἡμῖν τὴν κατ' αὐτῶν χαρισόμενος νίκην (Theodoret in loco).

preaching, the lost were saved, S. Augustine numbers it as a heresy.¹

Others, again, have believed that, not indeed any of those who died impenitent, but those who died in the faith of Christ, or some of them, were delivered by our Lord's preaching from the prison-house in which up to this time they had been kept, and that they went up with our Lord into heaven at the time of His ascension; grounding this idea on the words of S. Paul, in which he comments on the passage in the Book of Psalms (Psa. lxviii. 18), "Wherefore He saith, When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?" But the original words plainly show, as Bishop Pearson observes, that this triumphant act did not precede the ascent; and therefore, as we have shown that the triumph of Christ was completed on the cross, and that He there "led captivity captive," there is no need to interpret the words of the Psalmist or the apostle as if they referred to His bringing with Him into the heavenly courts a number of souls translated from Paradise. The ascension of our Lord was, probably, unaccompanied except by "the thousands of angels" (Psa. lxviii. 17, 18), and it is very observable that in the Twenty-fourth Psalm, when the demand is made the first time, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in,"

¹ "Alia, descendente ad Inferos Christo, credidisse incredulos, et omnes exinde existimat liberatos" (S. Aug. de Hæresibus).

and the question is asked, "Who is the King of glory?" the answer is, "The Lord strong and mighty, even the Lord mighty in battle." But when the demand is made the second time, and the same question is asked, the answer is, "The Lord of *hosts*; He is the King of glory." The first time, He enters alone, as the mighty Conqueror over Satan, sin, and death; but the next time is when His Church shall ascend with Him, the "hosts" of His faithful ones, who have overcome His enemies and theirs. Meanwhile, though their happiness is not perfect, yet they are doubtless far happier, because in more close and conscious and continual communion with Christ, than they ever were here; and hence we believe, as the Church teaches us, that though "the souls of the faithful, after their deliverance from the flesh, are in joy and felicity," yet their "perfect consummation and bliss" cannot be till the resurrection, when they shall enjoy it "both in body and soul in God's eternal and everlasting glory."

2. But another opinion has obtained with some, which we must now proceed to examine; viz., that the meaning of the expression, "He descended into hell," is not that His spirit went to any particular place after death, but that, in His agony in Gethsemane, and in His crucifixion on Calvary, He experienced, in all its severity, the wrath of God against sinners, whose Surety He was, and that He then and there endured all the torments which lost souls shall for ever endure; and that as He redeemed our bodies by the death of His body, so He redeemed our souls by the death of His soul. This seems to have been Calvin's view, and He went so far as to say that if Christ had

died only a corporeal death, it would have been of no avail.¹

It is, however, sufficiently evident that neither Gethsemane nor Calvary could have been the scene of which the Psalmist and the apostle speak, "Thou shalt not leave My soul in hell;" for, as Bishop Beveridge well observes, if this were the meaning of the words, the apostle could not so well have said this, as that hell was not left in His soul; neither could the Creed so well have expressed it, that "He descended into hell," as that "hell ascended up to Him." And as to the necessity of our Lord's soul dying to redeem our souls, Heylin observes, "Now the soul is subject to a twofold death; 1. of sin prevailing on it in this life, which is the natural depriving, or voluntary renouncing of all grace; the other, 2. by damnation in the world to come, which is the just rejecting of all the wicked from any fellowship with God in His glory, and fastening them to everlasting torment in hell-fire. Which of these can they think it was?" And so S. Ambrose asks, "In what, but in His body, did He make atonement for the sins of the people? In what did He suffer, except in His body?"² And Theodoret says, "He offered no other sacrifice, but His own

¹ "Nihil actum erat si corporeâ tantum morte defunctus fuisset Christus, sed operæ simul pretium erat, ut Divinæ ultionis severitatem sentiret, quo et iræ Ipsius intercederet, et satisfactionem faceret justo Judicio. Unde etiam eum oportuit cum Inferorum copiis æternæque mortis horrore quasi consortis manibus luctari. Ergo si ad Inferos descendisse dicitur, nihil mirum est, cum eam mortem pertulerit, quæ sceleratis ab irato Deo infligitur" (Calvin, Instit. l. 2, c. 16).

² "In quo, nisi in corpore, expiavit populi peccata? in quo passus est, nisi in corpore?" (de Fid. l. 3, c. 5).

body.”¹ And in addition to these testimonies, both of which he quotes, Heylin further adduces, as “another argument which concludes more fully against this new device than any testimonies of the Fathers, the institution of the Lord’s Supper by the Lord Himself, in which there is a commemoration to be held for ever, both of the breaking of His body, and the effusion of His blood, which by His bodily death is represented and shown forth till His coming again; but no remembrance instituted or commanded for the death of His soul.”

3. But some of Calvin’s followers went further than their master, and held that our Lord descended after His death, in His spirit, to the place of torment, and there experienced all the torments of lost souls, and that, had He not endured these, our souls must have suffered them, and could not have been saved. As this opinion is still held by others besides Calvinists, and as there is much ignorance on the subject, and as, unfortunately, the word “hell” is used to express both the intermediate state and the place of perdition, it may be well to adduce some arguments which may help to show clearly that our Lord neither did nor could be subjected to the torments of the lost. And,—first, it is by no means probable that that place of torment is at present tenanted at all. It is described by our Lord as “a place *prepared* for the devil and his angels” (S. Matt. xxv. 41). The devils whom He cast out from the man possessed in the country of the Gergesenes, cried out, “What have we to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of God! Art Thou come hither

¹ προσεγήνοχε δὲ οὐκ ἄλλην τιὰν θυσίαν, ἀλλὰ τὸ σῶμα ἑαυτοῦ (Dial. i.).

to torment us *before the time*—*ἡλθες ὥδε πρὸ καιροῦ βασανίσαι ἡμᾶς*” (S. Matt. viii. 29). “I adjure Thee by God, that Thou torment me not—*μὴ με βασανίσῃς*” (S. Mark v. 7). “And they besought Him that He would not command them to go out into the deep—*εἰς τὴν ἄβυσσον*” (S. Luke viii. 31). Into this abyss the devil is to be cast hereafter—*καὶ ἔβαλεν αὐτὸν εἰς τὴν ἄβυσσον* (Rev. xx. 1-3); but at present he is permitted to have dominion in the air, “of the powers of” which he is called “the prince” (Eph. ii. 2), and the resources of which he so cruelly directed against Job (Job i. 19), and with so much malice against our Lord and His apostles when they were crossing the Lake of Genesareth (S. Matt. viii. 24).¹ If, then, the place of torment has not yet been tenanted by those for whom “it is prepared,” and if the companionship of the evil angels is to be an element in the torments of the lost hereafter, the view of the Calvinists with reference to the soul of Christ will not stand.

But further, if, after the death of the body, a part, and that the greater part of our Lord’s work was to be performed by His disembodied spirit, then the great oblation was not consummated on the cross, but in the spirit-world. But our Lord said, “It is finished,” and not till He could say that, did He “give up the ghost.”

Again, in dismissing His spirit, He commended it into His Father’s hands. Heylin replies to this objection, “Does not David say, ‘If I make my bed in hell, behold,

¹ See Archbishop Trench’s notes on this miracle (p. 145), and his argument, based on the words *πιφύμωνσο* and *ἐπετίμησεν*, that Satan was the author of that sudden tempest

Thou art there' (Psa. cxxxix. 8)? But surely David was not speaking there of the place of torment, but either of the grave or of the world of spirits. That 'the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God,' is the guarantee that 'there shall no torment touch them' (Wisd. iii. 1)."

But besides, if it were necessary that our Surety should suffer the pains and penalties of the lost, He could not do this in His spirit alone. For the lost shall be tormented in their bodies as well as their souls, the instruments of their sin on earth being the instruments of their torment in hell.

Again, it was manifestly impossible that our Lord could endure the punishment of lost souls, because there shall be ingredients in their woe that He could not experience. Remorse for the past and despair for the future will be principal elements in their misery, of which it were nothing short of blasphemy to suppose that our Lord could partake.

4. S. Anselm thinks that the "hell" spoken of in the creed is distinct from Paradise, and that our Lord made a short sojourn in the place of torment, but not to suffer but to triumph.¹ He asks, whither Christ's soul went after His death? and answers, "To the heavenly Paradise, as He said to the thief, 'Verily I say unto thee, To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.' When, then," he asks, "did it descend into hell?" and he answers, "At midnight, before His resurrection, at which hour, as the angel destroyed Egypt, so, at the same, Christ spoiled hell, and made their darkness as bright as day."

5. Aquinas says that Christ descended only into Limbus

¹ In Eleucidario.

"according to a real presence (*secundum realem præsentiam*), and to all other places of the infernal pit only according to influence and effect (*secundum effectus tantum*)."

We conclude, that our Lord in commending His spirit into His Father's hands, went, as all others of the human family must do, into the place of departed spirits, and there was at rest after all the trouble and weariness which He had experienced on earth ; that while there He "proclaimed to the spirits who were in safe keeping (*τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνεύμασι πορευθεῖς ἐκήρυξεν*)" the completion of that great sacrifice which He had offered for their salvation ; and that while His body lay in the sepulchre, and His spirit was "free among the dead" (*Psa. lxxxviii. 5*), His Deity was still inseparably joined with either, and that during this great Sabbath He rested after all His work, which was now "finished."

The lessons we may deduce from the last saying of our Lord are many.

1. We learn the exceeding depth of our Lord's condescension and the boundlessness of His love for us. "For us men, and for our salvation," "He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (*Phil. ii. 8*). Nothing short of death would satisfy the hunger of His self-sacrifice. As we stand beside His cross and listen to His expiring cry, the words of His father David rise irresistibly to our lips, "Thy love to me was wonderful" (*2 Sam. i. 26*).

2. We learn with how great a value and how high an honour Christ regarded the written Word of God. We know how, in the wilderness, He met the three successive temptations of the evil one with three several quotations from the Scriptures,

and how continually in His preaching He referred to those Scriptures as being fulfilled in His Person ; and we have seen, also, that in these last seven sayings on the cross, in four out of the seven there was special allusion to Scripture prophecies ; and even in the moment of death, the last words He utters are quoted from the Book of Psalms. Thus would He teach us how to fortify ourselves against the assaults of the wicked one, by taking to ourselves "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God" (Eph. vi. 17), and to prepare ourselves against the hour of temptation, by "hiding God's Word within our heart that we may not sin against Him" (Psa. cxix. 11) ; to make the written Word our law and standard, seeking to fulfil its requirements and comforting ourselves with its promises ; and even in the hour of death, when we must meet for the last time our mighty foe, still to take with us to the conflict the sword which has so often stood us in good stead before, saying, as David did of the sword with which He had slain Goliath, "There is none like that" (1 Sam. xxi. 9).

3. We learn, that at the close of life (as, indeed, during the whole course of it), our chief care should be about the destiny of our spirit. For the body, we know that it must return to its native dust, and must be content to await the appointed time for its resurrection, when it shall be made like unto Christ's glorious body" (Phil. iii. 21) and shall share, through all eternity, the honour and the gladness of its kindred spirit. But for the spirit, now about to enter at once upon a new state of being, and to exchange faith for sight, time for eternity, and the distractions of earth for the rest of Paradise, we should commend it into the hands of

God "as a faithful Creator" (1 S. Pet. iv. 19), and a merciful "Redeemer" (Psa. xxxi. 5), "believing that He is able," and as willing as He is able, "to keep that which we have committed to Him against that day" (2 Tim. i. 12).

4. We learn to believe that the grave and the spirit-world are now changed from what they were. Jesus has sanctified and glorified both, having "through death destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil" (Heb. ii. 14) according to the promise, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O Death, I will be thy plagues; O Grave, I will be thy destruction" (Hos. xiii. 14). So that we may go down to the grave with the song of triumph on our lips, "O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. xv. 55, 57).

"Sweet Saviour, in mine hour of mortal anguish,
When earth grows dim, and round me falls the night,
Oh breathe Thy peace, as flesh and spirit languish;
At that dread eventide let there be light.

To Thy dear cross turn Thou my eyes in dying;
Lay but my fainting head upon Thy breast;
Those outstretched arms receive my latest sighing;
And then, oh! then, Thine everlasting rest."

(Hymns Ancient and Modern).

THE END.

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